THE SINCLAIRS OF OLD FORT DES MOINES

JOHNSON BRIGHAM

MRS. W. H. KIDDER
1310 Seventh Street
Des Moines 14, Iowa

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The *Sinclairs* of *Old Fort Des Moines*

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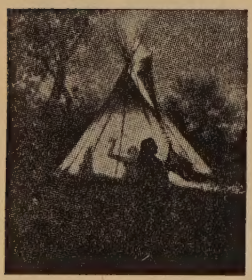
A HISTORICAL ROMANCE

By

JOHNSON BRIGHAM



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To the Pioneers of the Middle-West, whose joys and sorrows and whose conquering courage the author has attempted to visualize, this book is respectfully dedicated.

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FOREWORD

On the twentieth day of May, 1843, Captain James Allen, of the 1st U. S. Dragoons, with his subordinate officers and forty-eight men, disembarked from the Agatha — the first steamer to ply the waters of the Des Moines — at a triangular point made by the confluence of the Raccoon and the Des Moines, — a point previously selected by the Captain as the site of a fort, or garrison, which he had been commissioned to establish in the heart of the new Sac and Fox reservation.

In the history of our Government's dealings with the Indian are many chapters written in blood; but the story of the founding of Fort Des Moines is one well worth recalling as a partial offset to the many chapters of disgraceful intrigue coupled with the use of military force where fraud and guile proved unavailing.

The purpose of the Allen expedition was to protect the reservation from the incursions of the savage Sioux on the north and west; from the invasion of squatters from the east and southeast; from the illicit sale of whisky to the Indians, and from cut-throat horse-thieves who were running off, to points beyond the Mississippi and the Missouri, the ponies constituting the most substantial item of wealth in the Indian community-life of the period.

East of the meridian line at Red Rock, separating the abandoned reservation from the new one, along the border between the old and the new, were hundreds of settlers busily swinging the axe, grubbing stumps, plowing the virgin earth, and seeding the ground to corn and grain and garden truck. The old reservation was fast becoming dotted with log cabins. Here and there, furniture transported inland at great inconvenience and large expense, found its way into those humble homes, these marks of refinement constituting the one visible sign of class distinction on the frontier.

Neighborhoods in the early Forties covered magnificent distances. For weeks and months the cabin door of the pioneer would be darkened only by members of the family or by some Indian or party of Indians, begging, sometimes demanding, food and drink.

These are the rude conditions which this story of the border would portray, the purpose of the author being to place his work among the number of "human documents" which, more personal and therefore more vivid than official reports and chronicles and isolated fragments of incident, will enable the reader to obtain a clearer conception of the life of the recent past upon which our middle-Western commonwealths were builded.

Running through this story of pioneer and garrison life, like the flowing of its waters, is the historic Des Moines river, — traversed in turn by the fur-

trader Faribault, the soldier Kearny, the pioneer historian Albert Lea, and the explorer Frémont, and finally made tributary to the beneficent purpose of the government on which Allen, the soldier, was sent. The influence of the river, with its natural beauties, its early revelation and sure promise of agricultural and mineral wealth and its invitation to commercial enterprise despite its sandbars, jutting rocks, and treacherous rapids, is seen and felt in every chapter of the early history of Iowa, and therefore inevitably pervades the story which these pages would tell. Well has a pioneer historian said, —

"Nearly every state has some one particular river which especially attracts the attention of its citizens, on which their minds delight to dwell. . . Iowa has the beautiful river Des Moines on which her citizens delight to bestow their eulogies. . . In beauty of native scenery, in productiveness of soil, in mineral wealth, and in many things which attract attention and add to the comfort of man, the valley of the Des Moines is not surpassed by any locality in the world."

CHAPTER I

The Opportune Arrival of the Agatha

In the early days of steamboat navigation in the West, the traveler who for the first time ascended the Des Moines river was wont to gaze with mingled surprise and delight on turning the point beyond which stood sheer against the eastern sky the historic cliff known near and far as Red Rock. Here, in the center of an extensive limestone region, there rose from what was once the bed of the river, to the height of seventy feet or more, a solid mass of bright red sandstone, variegated here and there with layers of bright yellow. After an early evening shower, before the sun had dropped into his nest of treetops on the opposite bank, the rainbow was wont to rest a segment of its circle upon this sloping wall of color, seeming to have chosen the glistening mass of red and yellow as a fitting background for the picture.

It is said that when the Sac and Fox Indians held undisputed possession of the land about Red Rock, their soothsayers were wont to wait for this omen of good-luck — this conjunction of beauty in earth and air — before bidding them fare forth, to hunt or to battle with their ancient enemy, the Sioux.

It is generally accepted as fact that when Fari-

bault, and Kearny, and Albert Lea, and Frémont separately visited this point, they found the red rock emblazoned with strange hieroglyphs in yellow; and that the Indians, passing and repassing in their bark canoes, or standing on the river bank and looking up, were wont to regard this rude artistry with far more than the white man's admiration or idle curiosity.

One day well on in April, 1843, seven toil-worn men sat on the rude porch in front of the trading post at Red Rock, smoking their corncob pipes, after their frugal lunch of crackers and cheese, and solemnly debating the question tersely put by their leader: "Shall we stay and hold down our prospective claims; or shall we take the back-track for home?"

Each had tentatively driven stakes in the woods a few miles to the north. Their provisions running low, they had mounted their horses and started for Red Rock — not alone to replenish their food supply but also — on their leader's suggestion — to consider the question of "go or stay," freed from the forest gloom of their immediate surroundings.

The relatively trivial fact that they were several miles nearer home than when they started at sunrise that morning, had evidently affected the judgment of several of the party.

The seven ranged all the way from twenty to forty-five years of age. Five were unmarried but with

prospective wives awaiting their return. The younger of the married men, Robert Byrnes by name, was newly married and rich in anticipation of an addition to his family. The Nestor, and the strong man of the party, Adam Sinclair by name, was a well-to-do farmer, still in the forties and rich in realization, — for he had left behind him in Fairfield a wife who adored him and five promising children, two girls and three boys — the girls on the verge of womanhood, both teachers in the public school in Fairfield.

The married men were decidedly in favor of remaining. In fact, they hadn't for a moment wavered from their original purpose; but had urged the conference at Red Rock in the hope that a cheerier outlook and a word from the post-trader might enable them to hold their little party together.

During a pause in the discussion, after Sinclair and Byrnes had "had their say," honest Dan Turner, working partner in the trading post, seated himself on an arm of Adam's chair, and, without waiting to be asked for his opinion, thus disinterestedly dashed the hopes of the older men:

"It ain't for my interest to turn you men back down the river; but I can't help tellin' you that when you head your horses back where you come from you'll be doin' the only sensible thing sence you left Jefferson County."

Turner then proceeded to tell a number of "hard-luck stories," — of whole families "shakin' to pieces with ager," and their corn-fields "drownded out" by

floods; of others who had "lost out" through overlapping claims, and others still who had simply lost confidence in government doing anything to develop the reservation and had quit their claims in disgust.

"Boys, that settles it with me," said one of the waverers. "I'm goin' back to Jefferson county if I go alone." Two others said "me too," and two others were evidently under conviction.

Sinclair stubbornly shook his head and was about to reopen the case, when the shrill whistle of a river steamer — strange sound in these parts — cut short his words.

Eagerly listening, the party heard the whistle a second and a third time. Voicing the general astonishment, Adam could only say:

"Well, I'll be switched if that don't beat me!"

Next, they heard the familiar chug-chug of a steamboat and saw a little stern-wheeler curving round the point with evident intent to land.

To add to the thrill, it soon became evident that the boat was packed with soldiers. An army officer stood at the bow, field-glass in hand, alternately viewing the glory of Red Rock and studying the group of men by this time gathered at the landing. The boat-captain stood on the lower deck giving orders to the deck-hands.

The gang-plank was placed in readiness for the throw. The troopers thronged both decks, some running to and fro, others smilingly responding to the

waving of hats by the gathering throng at the landing.

At a signal from the officer in command, the troopers gave three rousing cheers for Red Rock and three more for the men gathered at the landing to meet them.

Not to be outdone in courtesy, the civilians on shore — their number increased by a dozen or more squatters camped in the woods near the landing — joined Adam Sinclair in "three cheers for the old flag" — floating at the steamer's mast-head, — and "three more for Uncle Sam's soldiers, whoever they be and whatever they're up to!"

Soldiers and civilians joined in loud laughter. And thus, without formal introduction the strangers were made firm friends.

The Agatha pulled up along the frail little boat-landing, making the slender piles tremble and bend as it jerkily edged along.

The soldiers, eager to escape from their confinement, most of them scorning the gang-plank, swarmed ashore. One, more eager than the rest, missing his step, fell back into the shallow water. Unhurt, he emerged from his bath and ran up the bank shaking himself like a water-spaniel, much to the amusement of all.

They were a jolly company of dragoons, — most of them mere youths and nearly all of them raw recruits, on whose minds army discipline set lightly

and upon whose faces love of adventure was written large.

The men were followed ashore by the commanding officer, who introduced himself to Post-trader Turner as "Captain Allen, First U. S. Dragoons, headed for Raccoon Forks, and under instruction to plant a garrison there for the protection of the Indians on the new reservation." He was formally introduced to the twenty or thirty men by this time assembled, and he in turn introduced Lieutenant Woodruff.

Captain Allen was short in stature and stout of build. His square face was adorned with a full beard closely cropped. His steel-gray eyes when alert seemed to penetrate the soul. When in repose they suggested absent-mindedness. In face, figure, voice and manner, he was afterward recalled as resembling Captain Grant of the Army of Occupation in Mexico — the General Grant of our Civil War.

Lieutenant Woodruff, still in the twenties, was much taller, slenderer and more erect than his superior officer. To anyone familiar with the type, it would have been apparent that he was fresh from the discipline of the Military Academy. Though lean in flesh, his broad, square shoulders, his well-set neck and the vigorous swing of his long arms and legs suggested the trained athlete. There was a resolute expression in his large dark eyes, and with it a compression of the lips which warned the observer that he was not to be trifled with. The young man's apparent haughtiness proved on closer acquaintance to

be but the reserve of one conscious of his own limited experience, and not quite at ease in his new surroundings.

Succumbing to the warmth of Adam Sinclair's welcome and the contagion of his good-humor, even Lieutenant Woodruff soon threw off his wonted reserve, and again and again the officers and their new-found friends gave way to unrestrained laughter.

Captain Lafferty, of the Agatha, after having given the post-trader orders for provisioning the steamer, went among the men on shore, needing no introduction, having known most of the settlers, as boy and man, at Keosauqua and other points farther down the river.

The Agatha had tied up for the purpose of taking on a fresh supply of wood and water and such stores as were needed for a trip of several days more, — which might lengthen into weeks.

While the deck-hands were busy loading, the dragoons were given ample freedom "to stretch their legs." Some took to the woods, and their strong, young voices were soon heard in shouts and laughter and songs of the camp. Though the water was far from warm, some went in swimming, splashing like so many sea-dogs at play.

Captain Allen and Lieutenant Woodruff eagerly accepted a challenge from Byrnes and Sinclair to a "best-three-in-five at quaits" (quoits). The immense horse-shoes handed out by the post-trader were over-large for the officers: but, handicapped

as they were, they held their opponents down pretty well, almost winning the tie. As the four were about to enter upon the last game, the civilians held a brief conference, which was followed by a wild play by Byrnes, the play accompanied by a significant glance at his partner. The worldly-wise Captain smilingly laid down his horse-shoes, remarking that soldiers were good losers and that friendship would cease then and there unless their opponents "quit playing off." The farmers, with a smile that was of itself a confession, agreed to put in their "biggest licks." The result was that by a series of lucky "hubbers" and "ringers" the two experts at the game easily beat the soldiers "out of sight." The victors, secretly exultant, received the congratulations of the defeated with a fine show of modesty, and readily accepted the challenge to a return engagement at "the Forks."

Late in the afternoon the boat-whistle resounded through the woods and echoed from the bluffs to the wooded hill on the opposite shore. The late swimmers grabbed their clothes and rushed on board. The strollers came running from the woods. Goodbyes were said and repeated again and again, and finally the bell rang; the perfunctory "all aboard" was called; the ropes were loosened and hauled in; the engine began its monotonous chug-chug, and the Agatha, swinging out into the stream, resumed her eventful voyage up the unchartered Des Moines.

CHAPTER II

The Sinclairs Take Possession of Their Wilderness Home

"Well, boys, I guess that talk with Captain Allen settled it with you, didn't it?" remarked Adam Sinclair as the steamer disappeared behind a bend in the river. "With a sure-enough fort at the Forks, to keep the peace between us and the Injuns, with the old reservation open Monday and the new one open two years comin' next October, *I'm* willin' to stay and take my chances. I goes back Monday, if I have to go alone."

Byrnes shook his head approvingly, saying: "Adam, ole man, I'm with you." Turning to the waverers he continued: "Come now, boys, jest fergit what you was a-sayin' afore that whistle blowed. The hull sitiwation's changed — now ain't it? — sence you've seen with your own eyes that the Gov-munt means business."

The unmarried men withdrew for a conference, the result of which was that three decided to hold down their claims and two took the back track for Jefferson county.

On the Sunday before the firing of the signal gun at midnight, from the Agency down the river, the woods were literally "full of 'em" — full of eager

settlers and speculators. They seemed to spring from the ground full-armed, like the Cadmus crop of dragon's teeth.

On Monday morning, the morning of that memorable first day of May, 1843, Sinclair and his neighbors busied themselves pacing off their respective claims, blazing trees and driving stakes.

From the first it had been agreed that all would join hands in clearing the ground and building the cabins. The numerous Sinclairs were first to be housed, and after them the Byrneses, and then the three unmarried men — the oldest first.

How they toiled — those happy-hearted home-builders! Trees of uniform size were cut into logs and hauled to the respective sites. The end of every log was carefully saddled and notched. The logs thus prepared were piled one on top of another making the side-walls, and then chinked and daubed with mortar. Shorter and still shorter logs, sawed diagonally, formed the triangular gables. As a basis for the roof, poles were laid from the cross-beam to the side-walls. Upon these poles were laid the clapboards. These were fastened down by weight-poles corresponding with the joists. These, in turn, were held in place by knees, or chunks of wood, fitted in between the joists. The clapboards had previously been chopped from the oak trees cut down to make clearings for the cabins.

Then there was the picturesque chimney erected

just outside each cabin, snugly fitted into the open space left by shortened logs at one end of the structure, the chimney made wide at the base to admit of huge back-logs in the open fireplace. Each chimney meant laborious quarrying, loading, hauling, unloading, lifting into place, trimming and mortaring. And there were the windows, sawed from the solid walls and the rude window-sash filled with oiled paper, or — as in the Sinclair cabin — with window-glass. And the doors — space had been provided for these, as for the chimney, by shortening the logs. Wooden bars were hung vertically upon wooden hinges and the bars were covered with thin clapboards. The wooden latch, with the latch-string hung out at will, completed the means of entrance and exit. The double-cabin erected for the Sinclairs included two door-ways. Most of the heavier interior furnishings were made by hand and were completed in advance of the coming of the "women-folks."

The modern multi-millionaire, viewing for the first time the twentieth-century palace made ready for his occupancy, can scarcely realize the joy and satisfaction felt by Adam Sinclair on contemplating the finished product of his own hands, supplemented by the willing hands of his friends and neighbors. His pride included also the site he had chosen. His "double-log" stood on the edge of a forest of oak, on an eminence commanding a view of the river and the woods and rolling prairie beyond.

The structure finally made habitable, one morning

in the late summer Adam hailed the stage-coach from "the Forks" and, mounted on the box, was soon confiding to his old friend, the driver, the fact that he was on his way back to Fairfield to get his family "and plant 'em in the best and biggest cabin on the river." He added the self-evident fact that he was "the happiest man on top o' the earth."

The gruff driver's curt comment was: "You look it!"

No knight of old romance ever received from tower-immured ladye faire a welcome more overwhelming than that which awaited this sunburned, unshorn, full-bearded home-builder on reaching Fairfield. Seeing his wife ambling along the main street on her way home from the post-office, without waiting for the driver to let him off, he sprang lightly to the ground, and, disregarding the "setters" on the bench in front of the tavern, he took the little woman in his arms and fairly lifted her off her feet in the ecstacy of his joy.

The overland journey to "The Point" — already known as Sinclair's Point — was patriarchal in the simplicity of its details. Let us take a snap-shot at the Sinclairs as they near their destination.

First in the procession strode the stalwart head of the family. Beside him, his daughter Mary, a blooming girl of twenty, whose bright blue eyes, red cheeks, trim, robust figure and springy step proclaimed her the fortunate "one in a thousand" blest with perfect health. One need not overhear their animated con-

versation to discover that father and daughter are comrades and in full enjoyment of the opportunity afforded them to make up for the weeks and months during which they have been separated.

Close behind came the second daughter, Susan, not more than eighteen, less striking in appearance than Mary, not quite as tall and scarcely as lithe as her sister; but nevertheless well-formed, well-featured and attractive and evidently possessed of rare serenity of soul.

The second of the three sons, a sturdy eight-year old, kept firm hold of Susan's hand as he manfully trudged along by his sister's side.

Next came the huge prairie schooner, with a stolid driver whom Adam had hired for the trip. Seated well back in the schooner, on the edge of a straw mattress and leaning against a feather bed, was Mrs. Sinclair, short, stout, round-faced, with an upward curve to her lips and benignant expression of the eye which helped explain the happiness written all over her husband's rugged countenance. A rosy-cheeked baby boy lay asleep by his mother's side with his head on her lap.

Behind the schooner came Sinclair's newly acquired span of horses drawing a heavily loaded farm-wagon. The horses were driven by "Adam junior," the eldest boy. Instead of riding at the slow pace maintained by the horses, the sturdy boy of twelve walked by the side of the wagon, evidently much impressed with his responsibility for the safe

delivery of his load. The wagon was piled high with household furniture, kitchen utensils and farm and garden tools, and projecting far out behind, securely tied on with a clothes-line, was an improvised hen-coop in which were imprisoned in close quarters perhaps twenty fowls, the property and especial pride of Susan Sinclair.

Bringing up the rear was the family cow tied to the wagon by a long rope which gave her ample latitude for grazing whenever the procession halted.

Late in the afternoon, on an August day which brought with it a suggestion of autumn, the Sinclairs came within sight of the cabin on the edge of the woods which was to be their home. As Adam, who led the winding way through the woods, came out into full view of his "palace," he stopped short and with conscious pride remarked:

"Wall, Ma, Mary, Susan, Adam Junior, Jimmie and baby, — there it is, what d'you think of it? You'd better say you like it; for it's that or nothin'."

Beyond the first "Oh!", "Oh!" from one another, not a word was spoken. No one — except the baby — dared attempt to voice the feelings inspired by the sight.

The wife and mother, heart-weary after years of temporizing "for the girls' sake," had finally come into her own! — her *home* — a cabin planned and in large measure builded by her dear husband's own hands! With uncertain voice she called out,

"Adam!" and when Adam came running toward his wife to find out what ailed her, she leaned out of the wagon as far as she dared and with tears streaming from her eyes, she kissed his upturned face again and again.

"That'll do for the present, ma," said the practical man of affairs, reaching up to help her out over the big wheel.

Mary, quite as overjoyed as her mother, but having better control of her emotions, without uttering a word ran toward the cabin, an open door inviting her. Taking her stand in the doorway, she waited the coming of the rest of the family.

Meantime the near neighbors were gathering on the grounds to watch the event, one to which each of them had contributed his part.

It was the subject of remark, as they stood waiting to greet Mrs. Sinclair, that "Adam's oldest" had blossomed out into a splendid woman since they'd seen her last.

Tall, nearly as tall as her stalwart father, her slender but robust figure at its full height, almost filling the perpendicular space of the low door, her shoulders well thrown back, her partially bared arms raised as she grasped the panels above her head, her bosom heaving with the exercise of running, her big blue eyes beaming with the excitement of the moment, her fluffy golden-brown hair, loosened from its fastenings, falling in wavy profusion upon her

shoulders, her cheeks suffused with the rich glow of young womanhood, Mary Sinclair seemed a veritable Winged Victory rounded out into completeness.

All unconscious of the admiration she excited, Mary was for the moment a child again. Her girlish impulse on breaking away from the rest was to "pretend" that she, not her father, was the one to welcome the family to their new home.

The fond father, intuitively guessing her purpose, smiled complacently, and with a patronizing wave of the hand, good-naturedly permitted her to do the honors in his stead.

By the time the family had run the gauntlet of the welcoming neighbors, Mary recovered her voice. With mock dignity, she grasped her father's outstretched hands exclaiming:

"Welcome, one and all, to the castle of the ancient and honorable family of Sinclair!"

Entering the cabin, what was the surprise of the family to find the capacious kitchen table—of Adam's own manufacture — loaded with a platter on which reclined, smoking-hot, well-browned and profusely stuffed, a monster wild-turkey, the odor of which, mingled with a suggestion of sage, whetted the Sinclair appetite to the point of rapacity. Big white boiled potatoes, their "jackets" off, carrots swimming in cream gravy, boiled onions, as big and white as the potatoes, and hoe-cake hot from the fireplace, — these constituted the substantial supper. But no —

on a shelf which had been built into the wall was a hot mince-pie, the aroma of which faintly asserted itself in competition with the stronger odor of the turkey.

It was Adam's turn to "break down." He said he was prepared for everything but this! Turning to Byrnes — who during the spring and early summer had developed into a famous hunter, gardener and cook — he tried to say, "Bob, this is your doin's," but before he could reach the last word his voice broke, and, making a dive for the side-door, was seen no more of men for the space of five minutes, when his wife hurried to the barn crying out:

"Adam Sinclair, everything on the table's gittin' cold. Quit your nonsense an' come an' carve the turkey!"

Mary met her father at the kitchen door and in an undertone said:

"Take a look at Mother sitting in her rocker waiting for you. See! the old happy look's come back! Why, pa, she's almost beautiful!"

"*Almost*! I guess not! There ain't any almost about it. I'm a better judge of beauty than you girls ever was."

Mary laughed heartily and, falling into the grandiloquent form of words with which she had welcomed the family, she led her father into the kitchen saying:

"Me lord, kindly escort me lady to the banquet table."

The little mother seated at one end of the table and "me lord" standing at the other, — another unexpected thing happened.

Adam Sinclair, though profoundly religious by nature, had never "joined the church" and had never adopted any of the ceremonies which then — far more than in these later times — were observed in pious families. Before taking his seat, however, — intuitively responding to the inward call of the old Covenanters from whom he was descended, — the father of the family reverently bowed his head, and, after a moment of silence, in a low voice, tremulous with emotion, uttered this brief prayer:

"May God's blessing rest upon us in our new home!"

Who could report the emotions welling in the hearts of this reunited family seated round that humble table, — their joyful consciousness of a new era for each and all, their varying dreams of the future, the buoyant eagerness of each for tomorrow's tasks, — and, no less eager for the tasks for which tomorrow's would be only preliminary — labors extending well on into the coming years, and having no unimportant part in the development of a commonwealth!

CHAPTER III

Fort Des Moines

After leaving Red Rock the Agatha met with two accidents delaying her progress. First, a piece of the machinery broke; but the engineer, with a suggestion from Lieutenant Woodruff, was equal to the emergency. Then, at Rattlesnake Bend, within a few miles and almost within sight of her destination, the heavily laden boat plowed into a sandbar. Two days were spent in constructing a raft and loading it with a portion of the cargo, and another day in reloading the boat after she had floated off.

Not until the afternoon of the twentieth day of May, 1843, did the Agatha reach her destination, — a triangular point made by the confluence of the Raccoon and the Des Moines, the spot previously selected by Captain Allen, as the most eligible site within the new reservation for the proposed garrison, — the site of the present capital of Iowa.

When the dragoons found themselves freed from their long imprisonment on the boat they were as jubilant as so many school-boys let loose for their summer vacation. They shouted and danced and swung their caps in air. A score or more of the irrepressibles formed a circle about the three officers and swung round and round, absurdly singing with

unrestrained glee the childish song of other days beginning —

Ring around a-rosey.

The officers, instead of resenting the liberty taken at the expense of their dignity, entered into the spirit of the occasion with boyish abandon.

While the fun was on, Captain Allen observed a group of Indians silhouetted against the crimson glory of the setting sun. They had appeared as if by magic on the edge of the wood about a hundred yards distant, three of them mounted upon gaily caparisoned ponies, grotesquely attired in feathers and furs incongruously dyed red, yellow, purple and green. The rest, a score or more, were picturesquely grouped about their leaders. All were stoically watching the undignified antics of the new-comers.

The Captain, with reason, presuming the peaceful nature of their visit, made haste to meet the Indians, followed by his lieutenant and several non-commissioned officers. The three chiefs dismounted and dignifiedly waited his coming.

Singling out an aged leader of the party, Captain Allen cordially extended his hand. The chief stiffly grasped it uttering in labored English a few words concluding with the recognizable word "Welcome." Beckoning to a youth who had learned to speak English indifferently well while employed at the Indian Agency down the river, the chief said:

"Ke-o-kuk's son — he speak."

The young man promptly came forward and after a brief conference with his senior, proceeded to say in broken English that the Indians on the reservation had received from runners daily reports of the steamer's progress up the river and, knowing that the mission of the troops was friendly, had placed no obstacles in its way. The purpose of their coming keenly appreciated by Ke-o-kuk, Ap-pa-noose and the rest, the reservation had deputized Pash-e-pa-ho to welcome them and to pledge the friendliness of every Sac and Fox on the reservation.

Pash-e-pa-ho, who in his younger days had earned for himself the disturbing soubriquet, "The Stabber," but who now, bent with age, was far from formidable, straightened himself and with much solemnity remarked:

"I know what he say: he say true; I say welcome. Goodbye."

The three horsemen and the two officers then formally shook hands; Young Ke-o-kuk assisted the aged chief to remount; and, with a horseman on each side and a trail of brown men behind, the party slowly moved westward.

Meantime, a detail of men had finished digging a deep hole in the soft earth near the Point; another detail had brought from the wooded bank of the Raccoon a tall white birch tree stripped of its branches; and, by the time the officers returned from the conference, the flag which on the trip up the river had floated at the mast-head of the Agatha was run up

the improvised flag-staff, and by that act the garrison of Fort Des Moines was declared officially established.

As it took the breeze, all joined in three rousing cheers for the flag, following the salute with three more for Captain Allen and three more for "Fort Des Moines."

The loud hurrahs arrested the attention of the Indians, by this time far out on the prairie, and seemingly part of the deepening crimson of the fading sunset. They stopped a moment, swung their arms out against the sky and responded with a friendly whoop. They then disappeared in the woods on their way to the river crossing.

After a substantial repast — the last to be served by the Agatha's cook, the men settled down to the work of unloading the boat's cargo, putting up tents and otherwise preparing to make themselves comfortable for the night. By eleven o'clock the great camp-fire had burned low and the tired dragoons, except those on guard, were fast asleep.

Toward evening on the following day, a company of Infantry, having marched across country from Fort Crawford, on the upper Mississippi, joined the dragoons and their commanding officer, Captain Gardenier, following instructions, reported to Captain Allen, thus completing the plan previously made by Colonel Kearny for the better protection of the Indians in their treaty rights.

The days which followed were busy, happy days.

There was much to be done and all were eager to do. The youths and young men who constituted the rank and file of the two companies, without parting with any of their youthful exuberance, took on from day to day more and still more of the constructive spirit of the pioneer, and the dignity which comes with growing consciousness of participation in the carrying out of a far-reaching purpose.

In due time, after stables had been erected, came from "down the river" the horses for which the dragoons had long waited. The animals first provided for, the building of officers' quarters and barracks for the men progressed with rapidity. The men became imbued with the keen joy which comes to the conscious creator of values, and seemed consumed with a frenzy for construction.

Lieutenant Woodruff had early made a plat of the garrison, and plans for the several buildings. The plans accepted by the commandant, the constructive work went forward rapidly. It was not long before the tents gave way to a little rectangular village of substantial log cabins.

Nor was it long before a few families gathered about "the Fort" and the welcome voices of women and children were heard on the one avenue extending north of and parallel with the street line of the garrison.

The happiest man in that little army of peace was Lieutenant Woodruff. Born with large constructive ability, possessed of a mathematical mind which had

absorbed all there was in the curriculum at West Point, he was never more satisfied with himself than when planning and supervising. With the buildings well under way, at the suggestion of Captain Allen, he had ridden over the country to the east and south until he had acquainted himself with "the lay of the land." He had drawn a topographical map of the old and the new reservation, and had laid out a road extending southeast along the Des Moines and another extending east to the Mississippi. These roads called for bridges, and to the planning and erection of these he gave much time and attention.

As the summer neared its close it became evident to Captain Allen that he must return to Keokuk and on the way visit several points on the Des Moines near its mouth, for the purchase of draft-horses, wagons and garrison supplies for the winter, and for the selection of an outfit for a steam saw-mill to be erected in the woods south of the Forks, — not only for a bridge-building campaign planned, but also in anticipation of the erection of a warehouse and several dwellings already needed at the Fort and hundreds of cabins and out-buildings sure to be needed after the opening of the new reservation. More soldier and administrator than engineer and machinist, the commandant had come to rely implicitly upon the skill and judgment of Lieutenant Woodruff.

Thus it came about that, one morning late in the summer, Captain Allen and Lieutenant Woodruff started down the river road on horseback on a gen-

eral purchasing tour. On the way they bought several horses and farm wagons, and at Burlington the wagons were loaded with supplies and sent back to the Fort. Teamsters were engaged and two trusted men from the quartermaster's department at Burlington were detailed to supervise the wagon-train on its journey up the river, and incidentally to ride and lead the horses back to the Fort. The two officers then went by boat to Keokuk. There they purchased a complete outfit for the proposed saw-mill; employed mechanics to build and run the mill and chartered the Agatha to transport the mill machinery to the Forks. Recalling their previous experiences on the river, they also engaged a keel-boat manned by six stalwart rivermen captained by one Charlie Millard, not only to carry additional stores to be picked up along the river, but also, in emergency, to haul the little steamer over the rocks and sand-bars sure to obstruct her way during the low water period preceding the September rains.

This much in explanation of the events described in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER IV

Keel-boat Captain Millard's Encounter with the Sinclair Girls

The men of the little community at Sinclair's Point had eaten their noon-day meal and were about to resume their work in field and wood when they were startled by the shrill whistle of a steamboat which they recognized as that of the Agatha, heard at Red Rock months before.

Work was postponed for the day and there was a general rush for the landing, several hundred yards away.

The first man to greet them after the boat had come alongside the dock was Captain Allen. Close behind him came Lieutenant Woodruff. Captain Lafferty hailed them from the lower deck assuring them that he would "see them later."

The visitors were given the glad hand and were pressed to accept the community's hospitality for the night. Returning to the boat for consultation, the officers soon announced that the boys — "the boat's crew" — had had pretty hard lines thus far and Lafferty would be very glad to give them a half-day off and a night's rest on the river bank.

By this time the keel-boat had been tied to a willow leaning far out over the bank, and, after washing his

hands in the river and wiping them on the long grass, "Cap" Millard, known everywhere in the river country as "Charlie Millard," came forward. He was introduced all around and was made to feel that he was included in the invitation.

"We'd like to take all the boys in for the night," said the hospitable Adam, "but log-cabins has their limitations, you know."

By this time Lafferty had joined the party on shore, and, hearing the remark, said:

"Don't worry about the boys: they're husky and you couldn't keep 'em under cover this warm night unless you bolted 'em in. All they want's sleep — an' lots of it."

On the way from the landing it was arranged that Adam should "sleep" Captain Allen; Byrnes, Lieutenant Woodruff; Johnson, Captain Lafferty, and Jones, Charlie Millard.

That was a great day at Sinclair's Point. All had worked hard and accomplished much, and, in honor of the men whose opportune arrival had determined the fate of their little community, all were glad to make it a holiday. As the "men-folks" sat under a big oak near the Sinclair cabin, there were hurried and mysterious back-door conferences. Women were seen hurrying and skurrying from cabin to cabin, carrying dishes, bed-clothing and mysterious packages which told of quick exchanges — for some were long on provisions, but short on dishes and bedding, and vice versa. And there were sudden partings of

chickens with their heads and feathers; and quick bakings of biscuits and pie and cake.

In these activities Mary and Susan Sinclair were everywhere present, running on errands for their mother, who had quickly planned the day's program, both for herself and for her less experienced neighbors.

"What would we've done without them girls!" was Mrs. Byrnes's grateful tribute to the value of their services in an emergency. Continuing a favorite subject she said: "If my baby-girl, when she's grown up, has half the gumption they've got, I'll be satisfied."

"We couldn't 'a' done anything without 'em," was the proud mother's quick response. "Adam wouldn't 'a' dared invite the gentlemen to stay all night if our girls hadn't been home to see us through."

After the last baby came to Mrs. Sinclair, it had become apparent to her daughters that the mother wasn't as strong as she had been; and when Adam decided to locate on the new reservation, they resigned their positions in the school at Fairfield that they might "go with ma and help her settle." The school-board filled their places temporarily, assuring them that they might come back in the fall and resume their duties.

While Adam Sinclair was showing the three other guests the improvements made in the neighborhood during the busy months since the civilians and sol-

diers had parted company at Red Rock, let us follow the keel-boat captain's adventures.

As Millard was on his way from the river to the distant cabin of the Joneses, he took a short cut, passing in the rear of the Sinclair home. Hearing the squawk of a chicken, he looked up, and there was Susan Sinclair kneeling on one knee, her brown arms bare, the red blood of youth and health penetrating the rich brown of her cheeks, her full lips firmly closed, her gaze bent pityingly upon a struggling chicken which she was vainly endeavoring to lay upon the block for slaughter. In her right hand she tightly grasped a hatchet from which dripped the blood of her last victim.

Millard coolly interrupted with —

"Excuse me, Miss; but let me show you an easier way."

Susan turned her head toward the stranger, indignant at the interruption. Seeing only good-nature and helpfulness in the rough but handsome face bending over her, the momentary irritation gave way to a smile. Without a suggestion of conventionality, without even a word, she coolly handed him the squirming fowl, offered him the reeking hatchet — which he declined — rose to her feet, and took her stand in front of him, critically awaited his demonstration.

Millard grasped the chicken by the neck and twirled it rapidly. In a moment the headless body fell at his feet. With a self-complacent expression

as though the method used by thousands before him had originated with him, he picked up the quivering fowl and laid it with the rest.

Susan informed him that in her judgment there wasn't much to choose between his method and hers. Both were horrid — especially when one has to operate on pet chickens of her own raising.

The remark reminded Susan of her duty to dress the chickens. With a faint smile she thanked the stranger for his kindness, and started for the kitchen, two chickens in each hand.

Millard hastened to relieve her of her burden; but, not quite comprehending Susan's reserve, he stopped, and simply begged her pardon for the interruption, adding:

"Knowin' who *you* was, I almost forgot to introduce myself. I'm Cap Millard — Charlie Millard for short. I'm boss of the keel-boat gang. Hope to meet you this evening."

Susan thanked him again and assured him that her mother had plans for a pleasant evening which she wasn't at liberty to disclose.

A half-hour later, learning that the other men of the party had gone up the river several miles, Millard sat smoking, under an elm in front of the Jones cabin when Mary Sinclair opened the door near him and passed out on her way home. In one hand she held a market-basket filled with dinner plates and with the other she tightly grasped a large platter, firmly pressing it against her side to steady it.

Not waiting to ask permission, the riverman touched his hat and coolly took the basket from her hand saying:

"That's too much of a load for one: I'll let you carry the platter."

Mary, stopping short, looked at the stranger quizzically and then, laughing heartily to cover her surprise and embarrassment, demurely proceeded on her way, Millard carrying the basket by her side.

Once beyond the hearing of Mrs. Jones, Millard with mock humility remarked: "Miss Sinclair, would you mind tellin' me what you was laughin' at?"

Shifting the heavy platter to the other hand, Mary regarded her questioner confusedly, conscious that the blood was rushing to her cheeks. Turning on him with all the audacity she could muster, she inquired:

"Don't you think you had best make yourself known before you put me on my defense?"

For a moment he was taken aback; but, quickly recovering, he answered:

"You're dead right, Miss Sinclair. My name's Charlie Millard, Cap Millard for short. I'm a riverman by profession. Just now I'm bossin' a keel-boat taken in tow by the Agatha to help 'er over the rocks and sand-bars when she runs aground. I was invited here out of pity I reckon. Your dad an' the rest kinder hated to draw the line on me. Now I've answered you, please answer *my question*: What was you laughin' at a minute ago?"

"To be frank with you," Mary responded, "I was

so taken back when you took that basket out of my hand without asking my permission — you see I'm a school-teacher and have to be asked — that I just couldn't think of anything smart to do or say, so I just burst out laughing to hide my confusion. My father says when I'm in doubt and don't know what to play, I laugh — and play out the first card that comes to hand."

The boatman looked at her admiringly and said:

"That laugh o' yours would take the trick every time if *I* was playin' against you."

"Changing the subject," said Mary, eyeing Millard's big top-boots, his gray corduroy suit and his gray slouch hat, "if you hadn't told me you were a boatman, I might have taken you for a bandit chief, you're so much better dressed than boatmen usually are."

"O, I can look as tough as the next one," he laughingly responded; "but the fact is, when I found I was likely to meet the Sinclair girls I'd heard so much about down the river, I jest went down into my trunk an' got out the best I had — an' you see the result!"

"Have you always been a boatman?" Mary innocently asked, admiring the man's splendid physique set off by his jaunty corduroys.

"O, no, Miss Sinclair," he answered in a bantering tone. "For the first dozen years or more I was — well, jest a boy. Then I helped dad on the farm, goin' to school winters. Then, when I found I'd learnt all the schoolmarm knowed, — she wan't no such school-

marm as you though, — when I'd pumped her dry, I lit out fer Chicago where Frink & Walker took me on as a stage-driver 'tween Chicago an' Galena. It'd take too long to tell you how I happened to jump from the driver's box into a keel-boat; but I made the jump — an' I ain't seen the day sence that I've been sorry I made it."

"You speak of helping the Agatha over the rocks and sand-bars. Don't you ever get tired of helping other people over the hard places, and poling your way against the stream?" continued Mary by this time thoroughly interested in the unique personality that had been thrust upon her.

"O I'm no common everyday boatman, I'd have you know," continued Millard with a self-complacent smile. My men call me Captain Millard to my face, and 'Cap' or 'the boss' behind my back. When I set down with my friends and cronies I'm plain Charlie: but when the Agatha gits where she can't budge, and Cap Lafferty calls on me to help 'im out, you ought to see my men in action! Then's the time I wouldn't swap jobs with John Tyler, or even General Scott!"

With growing self-complacency the riverman continued:

"There's been times on this very trip when as big a man as Cap Allen, an' even his right bower, Woodruff, had to admit they were mere babies alongside o' me an' my crew! O, I like river life. Somethin' new every turn you make. It's hard lines part of the time, but there's long rests between-times. I'm goin'

to stick to my boat till I git all the tired out o' my system!"

Again interrupted by Mary's laugh, he remarked:

"If you'd been brought up a *boy* on a farm you wouldn't laugh at that." Resuming he said:

"Now I'll give you somethin' to laugh at. Hear me. When I git over that tired feelin' I'm goin' to settle down an' git married — that is if I can find some girl that 'll look as good to me as" — here his self-assurance almost failed him — "wall, not to make it too personal, some girl that 'll look as good to me as — as, wall, say you or your sister."

Mary raised her one free hand deprecatingly. Refusing to take the loquacious riverman seriously, she laughingly remarked she hardly knew whether to regard him as a spoiled child or a youth in need of a guardian. Then, calling his bluff, she looked at him quizzically and asked:

"Mr. Millard, am I to consider this a declaration? If so, is it one of the kind that admits of indefinite postponement on your part? Or is it intended to take effect immediately? If the latter, am I to regard myself as principal or agent? By the way, I infer from what you say that you must have met my sister: did you submit your declaration to her also?"

Brushing aside these pleasantries as irrelevant, if not immaterial, Millard went on:

"When the time comes, if I don't find the right girl, why I ain't goin' to drown myself! I'll jes' say to myself, 'what is to be will be' an' I'll set down an'

wait. I may die a-waitin'; but 'what's the hodds as long as you're 'appy'! By that time I may like so many girls — an' widders — that I can't settle down on any one of 'em. They say there's no fool like an ole fool!"

"But, you wouldn't go back to farming, would you, with such a vivid memory of that tired feeling?"

"You may be blamed sure, when I go back to the farm I'll hire men to do all the hard work an' let *them* git the tired feelin'. No; between *old* friends" — smiling complacently at his assumption — "I'm balin' into my system all Cap Lafferty an' his engineer knows about runnin' a steamboat, an' if what Cap Allen and Lieutenant Woodruff say comes half true, w'y in a few years there'll be a line o' steamers on the Des Moines; and some day when you come down to the Point to see the boat come in, you'll see Cap. Millard takin' off his hat to you!"

By this time Mary was laughing again, and the physical exertion loosened her unruly hair. With her one disengaged hand she vainly endeavored to fasten it, but, blown forward by the wind, it fell flooding her face with a glory reflected from the afternoon sun.

Curious, but not in the least annoyed, Millard, temporarily relieving her of the platter, resumed:

"I'd like to have you tell me what you're laughin' at *now*! Have I made such a blamed fool of myself, tellin' you all I know an' guessin' at the rest, that you jest can't help it?"

With several hairpins yet remaining in her mouth, and with both hands nimbly fastening the heavy mass of hair, Mary stammered an apology, reminding him of her father's remark about her recourse to laughter when in doubt.

Millard promptly responded:

"O, you'll take the trick every time, with that laugh of yours. I'm ready to throw up my hand now."

Then, taking a new tack, as the two resumed their walk, Millard said:

"Do you know, you girls both look like your dad? I wouldn't think girls could look so much like their dad, an' yet be so much better lookin'. — Laughin' at me again! Now *I* don't see nothin' to laugh at. Let me come at you another way. You wouldn't think it, but there's lots of sentiment in me. I'm always seein' a likeness 'tween men an' animals, an' 'tween girls an' birds. Take your sister now. With that brown dress o' hers matchin' her brown eyes and brown hair, she makes me think of nothin' so much as a brown thrush. An' I'll bet my last two-bits she can sing like a thrush — now can't she?"

Mary qualifiedly admitted the fact.

"Now I'll always think of *you* as a blue bird — with them sky-blue eyes an' that dark blue dress. O, you an' your sister know how to dress. If it's nothin' but calico, you both know what to pick out to make yourselves look your prettiest. An' sing — you needn't tell me you don't sing. Can't we git

together under the trees somewhere this evenin' an' have a sing? I sing, myself, sometimes: but I needn't tell you I ain't no bird."

By this time they had reached the Sinclair cabin. Mary thanked "Mr. Millard" and offered to take the basket.

"Look out!" exclaimed her attendant, "You're goin' to drop that platter; I saw it wabble. I'll see them plates safely into the kitchen 'fore I let 'em go. I feel responsible for them plates."

Mary had already learned that the boatman would have his way; so she meekly preceded him into the kitchen.

Mrs. Sinclair, with sleeves rolled up and face red from the heat of a big fire in the fire-place, dropped the fork from one hand and a big spoon from the other, and, hurriedly wiping her hands on her blue checked apron, waited in silent wonderment for an explanation.

For the first time that afternoon, Millard was perceptibly embarrassed. The presence of the queen of the kitchen confused him. Setting the basket down, he awkwardly stepped backward and was feeling for the door when Mary arrested his undignified retreat saying:

"Mother, this is Mr. — Mr. —

"Millard," said the visitor in an undertone.

"This is one of our city's guests, Captain Millard, of the keel-boat now engaged in assisting the government steamer Agatha to Fort Des Moines."

Millard laughed at the grandiloquence of Mary's introduction and meekly proceeded to explain that he was the guest of the Joneses; had insisted on relieving her daughter of part of her load, and, fearful lest she might drop the plates, had invaded her kitchen.

Mrs. Sinclair wiped her hands a second time, and cordially shaking the visitor's hand, thanked him for his kindness, remarking that he must be the gentleman who had taught her daughter, Susan, to dispatch a chicken "without hurtin' its feelin's!"

Millard gave an embarrassed laugh and with a low "good-afternoon" retreated down the steps, stumbling and almost falling in the attempt.

Hearing two separate and distinct giggles, he looked behind him and there at the open window stood Susan Sinclair, who, on seeing him turn round, quickly looked off into space; and above her stood Mary, with her arm twined around Susan's waist, her eyes following her sister's — each vainly endeavoring to suppress a smile at his discomfiture.

"On pretty good terms with himself," was Susan's laconic remark as she resumed her task of "picking up" in the front room.

"Yes, and evidently with everybody else," was Mary's response.

"Mary, I thought you'd never come," exclaimed Mrs. Sinclair.

"But, mother, you know it's a long way home from the Joneses," was the meek response.

Mrs. Sinclair smiled and, shaking her head, resumed her basting.

CHAPTER V

A Notable Banquet in the Wilderness

The mystery of many kitchen-door conferences and of the hurrying and scurrying from house to house was revealed to the guests of honor when announcement was made by Adam Sinclair that early that evening a picnic supper would be served on the Sinclair grounds.

The guests had been jokingly given to understand that for a few hours before the feast their room would be better than their company; but that they "must report at once on the ringing of the bell at six sharp."

While the four sojourners were seated in the shade of the pilot-house, on the deck of the Agatha, smoking their pipes, and discussing the probabilities of war with Mexico, Adam Sinclair and his neighbors were busily engaged carrying out tables, arranging them in a row on the grass, propping them up to prevent them from wobbling, and performing diverse and sundry other services required by their wives.

The women-folks were equally busy spreading their reserves of table linen, arranging their choice china and their common everyday ware. It is scarcely necessary to add that the choice pieces of china

were placed at the end of the table reserved for their guests.

These simple entertainers were happily innocent of all knowledge of the time-consuming art of serving in courses, and consequently planned to place all the good things on the table before their guests were seated — all except the mince pie, which the Sinclair girls were commissioned to serve with the second cup of coffee, both hot from the Sinclair fireplace.

The unwritten *menu* of this memorable but heretofore unchronicled feast need not be itemized here. It will be sufficient to remark that when the guests, hungry as they were for home-cooking, confronted the array of good things set before them they were unitedly of the opinion that they had made a sad mistake in eating any food that day.

In quick response to the bell, the guests appeared, the officers in full uniform — for the first time since their departure from Keokuk, the captain of the Agatha in the best he had, — which was none too good, — but with his beard closely cropped in honor of the event; and the keel-boat captain in his picturesque gray corduroys, and wearing an ornamental belt, morocco-topped boots, a low Byron collar, a flowing black tie, and a self-satisfied smile.

There had been several distinct flurries in the minds of the hostesses as to the order in which their guests should be seated. Without experience in the conventionalities of the banquet table, the ladies of Sinclair's Point pursued the one wise course in all

social matters: they consulted their own best judgment as to what was most fitting. Mrs. Sinclair, recognized as the social leader of the little circle, must sit at one end of the long table, and Mr. Sinclair — or "the squire" as he was commonly called because of his tried ability as an adjuster of differences between neighbors — must sit at the other, and act as toastmaster. Captain Allen's place was at Mrs. Sinclair's right, and Lieutenant Woodruff's at her left. Mrs. Jones, an ex-teacher, was to be seated between Captain Allen and Captain Lafferty. To help her mother entertain the gentlemen, Mary Sinclair was placed between the lieutenant and the keel-boat captain.

It should be said, in passing, that Mary was credited by the uncritical neighborhood with unlimited knowledge and inexhaustible resources in conversation!

The loquacious Millard was counted on to "make talk" all along the line, and especially to draw out the somewhat reticent Susan, who was to be seated at his left, who, Mrs. Jones said, could "talk as well as her sister, once get her started." The adult members of the other families in the circle were expected to fill the remaining space, with Mrs. Byrnes and Mrs. Johnson flanking the squire. Back in the shade on the ground — there "to be seen and not heard" — was the younger contingent, — close enough to hear all that was said, and presumably on call if needed.

The close of that late summer day was perfect,

as befitting the event. The sun set in a glory of blue and gold, and the glory was reflected in the happy faces grouped about the table.

The squire, an expert in the well-nigh lost art of the carver, had previously carved the two wild turkeys so deftly that when they were brought on, apparently intact, but little remained for him to do but serve as distributor. The turkeys were supplemented by several chickens "done to a turn."

One is tempted to linger on the material success of this famous dinner; but, letting the imagination supply the details omitted here, we will now look in on our happily seated party and see how they get on together.

As often happens at table when men and women not used to the familiar give-and-take of table-talk sit down together in a formal way, there was at first an awkward pause, each waiting for someone else to "break the ice."

To the general surprise, the supposedly reticent lieutenant was the one to break the ice! He sat facing the glistening river of gold, with its colorful fringe of elms and oaks, the tall elms standing out in fan-like curves against the rapidly deepening red of the early evening sky. With honest directness and wholly free from the audacity which characterized the riverman's approach a few hours before, observing the glory reflected from Mary's golden-brown hair, and the blue of the sky in her eyes, consciously enjoying the view, but sub-consciously reveling in

the beauty of the young woman by his side, he exclaimed:

"What could be more beautiful!"

As Mary met the lieutenant's admiring gaze, she felt the blood coursing to her tell-tale cheeks. Annoyed by her all too apparent self-consciousness, she summoned her will to the rescue of her pride, and looking off toward the west, remarked:

"I'm glad to find you so observant, Lieutenant Woodruff, for, the moment before you broke the awkward silence, I was wondering if I'd have to call your attention to my favorite view and fairly *make* you see its beauty!"

"See it? Could any one be blind to it?" responded the lieutenant with enthusiasm.

"Y-ess: perhaps not totally blind, but very near-sighted," she remarked playfully.

The incipient matchmakers present — and the term included all the married women seated at the table — exchanged significant glances which Mary, still embarrassed, could not fail to note.

Never was Adam Sinclair's elder daughter more grateful for service rendered by her father than when, wholly unconscious of the general undercurrent of surmise, he boastingly remarked:

"Lieutenant Woodruff, you may not realize it, but you've only just *begun* to see the beauties of our Des Moines valley!"

Continuing, the squire proceeded to explain the "lay o' the land," in the valley, waxing eloquent as

he talked knowingly of the rival claims of timber land and open prairie, concluding with a glowing tribute to the beauty of the wooded bluffs along the river and the inexhaustible fertility of the bottom lands and the prairies beyond the bluffs.

By this time Mary had regained her composure and, anxious to redeem herself and in some measure at least fulfill the expectations of her family and friends, she began, in an undertone, nervously and somewhat at random, gaining confidence as she proceeded:

"Do you know, Mr. — I beg your pardon; I mean *Lieutenant* Woodruff? No, of course you couldn't know, and you never could have guessed — that in the distribution of the honors of this occasion — this *event*, I should have said, I was given the high honor — and along with it the serious responsibility — of entertaining one of the two *silent* men of your party! Of course you can guess who he is! Now I've revealed the secret, you'll help me out, I know. Let me explain, for I see you don't quite follow me — and no wonder.

"These dear neighbors of ours — and, for that matter, my own folks too — honestly think that because I'm a seminary graduate and have taught school, I'm competent to converse on any subject Lieutenant Woodruff may broach — or broach any subject Lieutenant Woodruff might be expected to be interested in!

"What queer notions people have of people — even our next-door neighbors!" And in a still lower tone, "Now there's darling Mrs. Byrnes — I love her dearly, but — listen to the absurd remark she made this forenoon! She said to Mother — and Mother of course had to repeat the remark to me: 'What that Mary Sinclair don't know there ain't any use o' *my* tryin' to learn!' Why that woman knows more about life — real life — life as lived in a two-room cabin — than was ever dreamt of in my simple philosophy!

"And here I sat, wondering while I ate, where along the line I could with least damage to my reputation break into your larger world — a world full of books I've never even heard of, full of experiences wholly outside the range of my experience! — By the way, you've taught school, haven't you, lieutenant?"

The nonplussed young man regarded his questioner with mingled amusement and curiosity. He began:

"Before answering your question, let me set you right on a point of military etiquette. You first addressed me as 'Mr.' and afterwards as 'Lieutenant.' You were right the first time. In the regular army an officer below the rank of captain, when off duty, is plain 'Mr.' Now answering your question, I regret to have to say I have never taught school. I passed examination once, when I was very young, and had a country school offered me: but, learning that the big boys in the school had thrown the last teacher out

into a snow-bank, and threatened to serve the new teacher the same way, I played for safety and became a soldier!"

A grim smile accompanied the remark.

Mary laughed heartily and, clasping her hands eagerly, exclaimed:

"Go on! go on! I was really afraid you were wholly lacking in what some one has termed the saving sense of humor."

Glancing across and up and down the long table, the lieutenant observed that all were now conversing freely and that no one but the animated young woman by his side was following his self-centered narration. He therefore resumed:

"Instead of teaching the district school in Westfield, I went to West Point. Miss Sinclair, I feel I owe everything to the big boys of that Westfield district school for, had they not thrown the last teacher out into a snow-bank, they might have thrown the next; and a youth with such an ignominious record as that would scarcely have dared to brave the perils of the military academy; — even if he had had the opportunity. And if I hadn't gone to West Point — don't you see? — I wouldn't have been steered by Fate to this delightful spot; I wouldn't have witnessed your wonderful sunset and — last but far from least — I would have missed the happiness of sitting at the banquet with one at my side especially commissioned to serve as my entertainer-in-chief, — and if I may add —"

"Why, Lieutenant — I should say *Mr.* Woodruff!" — interrupted his fair entertainer-in-chief, again blushing.

"What have I said? What do you think I was about to say, that you should call a halt?" inquired the lieutenant.

"O, nothing — It's not what you said, for it was very cleverly said — quite after the manner of Jane Austen's parlor heroes; but, really, Mr. Woodruff, you were represented to me as the *silent* man beside whom even your captain was represented as almost garrulous!"

The lieutenant laughed loud and long. The captain, hearing his name pronounced, paused in the midst of a story, long enough to express the hope that Miss Sinclair was saying something nice about him.

Mary could only say that while her remark might by some be regarded as complimentary, it was at best only a rather doubtful compliment."

"*Very doubtful*, captain," remarked the lieutenant.

"Then I won't ask you to repeat it," added the captain, resuming his story.

With a look of challenge which heightened her beauty — so thought the susceptible young man at her side — Mary turned on the lieutenant with —

"Assuming that your Westfield and West Point story is founded upon fact, will you kindly tell me — seriously now — just how much fact there is in the

reason you gave for taking up arms as a profession?"

"Now that you are serious, I'll be serious too," was the response. "The Westfield story while true as to fact, was by inference a fiction, invented to meet the good-natured attack you made upon the fortifications I had thrown up in self-defense. Since you really want to know the worst, I'll tell you — though it may seem boastful — that I did pass examination, was elected teacher and did engage to take the Westfield school, when the purpose of the big boys came to my ears. Having taken the measure of my temper — not as well under control as it is now — I give you my word in all seriousness, Miss Sinclair, that I was fearful lest, in the heat of my righteous indignation, I might even *kill* the overgrown and overconfident-youth on whom the boys placed their reliance for a repetition of the indignity of the winter before. So, when our congressman named me as the district's representative at West Point, I hastily accepted, and — here I am, presumably an expert in the art of killing men collectively, — in a worthy cause of course."

Before the end of his story, the ironical smile came back, bringing a flush of indignation to the young woman's cheek. Turning on the lieutenant, she gave full vent to her feelings.

"Mr. Woodruff, if you don't see fit to pursue the subject any further, I must be content. At the beginning of your story, I innocently credited you with

genuine seriousness: but you must admit that before you concluded you had quite gone back to your original sin — that of falsifying by inference. You can't convince me that you cold-bloodedly spent four years at West Point for the sole purpose of becoming an expert in the horrible art of killing men collectively!"

Millard had succeeded to his heart's content in drawing out Susan with his tales of adventure and in making her and the people across the table laugh immoderately at his droll stories of river life. But he was just a little piqued because the lieutenant had so completely absorbed Mary's attention that she had not heard even one of his best stories. Turning on his friend, the boatman bantered the lieutenant on his seriousness, adding that after his own recent encounter with Miss Sinclair, he wouldn't have dreamt it was possible for her to keep so long from laughing even the lieutenant out of countenance!

At this point the mince pie and the second cup of coffee were served. While the party lingered over the fragrant coffee, Squire Sinclair slowly rose, and, stationing himself behind his chair, and holding on to it for firmer support, with a touch of old-fashioned formality, he thus delivered himself:

"We are very glad to have with us at this feast the distinguished soldiers and gentlemen who have honored us by their visit. Our guests can't hardly realize what their visit means to us livin' all by ourselves here in this neck o' the woods. You come from a

world we're entirely cut off from. And yet we're a part of that world. I don't have to admit to you, gentlemen, that we ain't speech-makers, for you know well enough we ain't, but we *air* good listeners and we want you all to know we're interested in everything that interests you. What I'm tryin' to get at is that my neighbors, Byrnes an' Jones an' Johnson, and the women-folks at my end of the table have been a-caucusin' an' they're all agreed with me that we ought to have some o' the good things passin' at t'other end of the table: an' I've been asked to call on our guests for a few words; an' so I'm goin' to propose a few toasts. The first one will be — 'The new army post at the Forks,' and I will call on Captain Allen to give us a few words in response."

The squire sat down amid a storm of applause, with a self-satisfied smile on his face.

The captain looked puzzled, then embarrassed, then relieved. He apologized to Mrs. Sinclair for cutting short the story he was telling her "when the unexpected blow came" and began:

"Squire Sinclair, and friends: soldiers are, in one respect at least, like farmers. They're doers — not talkers — certainly not orators. I would be ungrateful, indeed, were I insensible to the many courtesies extended by the hospitable people of Sinclair's Point. I thank you heartily for this rare courtesy and for the kindly spirit which prompted this most enjoyable banquet. The memory of this delightful occasion will follow us on our journey up the river

and remain with us on our journey through life. And will the members of the fair sex present permit a word of special thanks to the ladies who so bountifully prepared these many good things to eat. No one enjoys home-cooking — and lots of it — more than the soldier off duty — unless it be the sailor on inland waters'' — bowing to Lafferty and Millard with a grim smile at his feeble attempt at a joke.

The three other guests applauded vigorously and the ladies smiled with evident appreciation of the compliment.

''But,'' continued the captain, ''I almost forgot the toast to which I was asked to respond. While even born orators cease to be orators after a few years of service in the army, I have with me for all sorts of emergencies a young soldier whose few years of service haven't quite suppressed the gift he inherited from his honored father. I therefore, in this emergency, turn over to Mr. Woodruff, the task — easy for him but hard for me — of responding to the toast so kindly offered.''

With that the captain sat down, mopped his face with his silk handkerchief and bowed his acknowledgements for the applause which followed. Noting the lieutenant's embarrassment and hesitancy, the captain facetiously added, ''Lieutenant Woodruff: obey orders.''

The young officer, entering into the spirit of his captain's jest, rose with the precision of the trained soldier, and, hiding his embarrassment behind an as-

sumed stoicism, began somewhat mechanically, echoing the appreciation expressed by his chief. Disclaiming any talent for speaking, he addressed himself to the subject assigned. Recalling his conversation with Mary, he frankly declared that should service in the army ever become synonymous with mere slaughter of his fellow-men, red or white, he for one would at once resign the commission he had worked for so long. He was glad to be able to say that thus far he had felt only the dignity, the nobility, of his calling.

"What is the mission which brings us here?" he continued. "Is it conquest? Are we coming among the Sac and Fox Indians as slayers — as subtle intriguers to wheedle or cheat them out of their treaty rights? You know the answer. Our mission is to safeguard — not to kill — to protect the wards of the nation not only from their savage enemies, but also from the greed of white traders and thieves, from the land-lust of squatters and from the demoralizing habits which many of them have contracted in their intercourse with white men on the border. This is surely a mission to stimulate lagging patriotism, a mission that must enhance the respect with which our Government is regarded by both white men and Indians. It is no affectation of patriotism to declare that on such a mission a soldier should be willing to risk even his life.

"— But I hadn't thought to say so much. Permit me to add in conclusion, for Captain Allen — since

he named me as his mouthpiece — and for my brother soldiers at the Fort, that there will be no walls about our little garrison, no moat or drawbridge to keep you out, and that we hope and trust you will keep well worn the road between Sinclair's Point and Fort Des Moines."

With the same military precision which marked his rising, the lieutenant dropped into his seat. A slight flush suffused his cheeks; but with this exception he gave no evidence of the sway of emotion with which he had expressed his feelings, especially as to the soldier's mission. All felt the spell of his earnest words and, after a round of applause, silence ensued, happily broken by the somewhat loquacious steamboat captain, who, turning to Mrs. Byrnes, said:

"Let's see; where was I at? O, I was tellin' you of the burnin' of the Prairie Belle."

At this point, the squire interrupted Lafferty with a command that he respond to the toast, "The Navigation of the Des Moines."

The Agatha's captain, without the least embarrassment, promptly rose to his feet, and plunged at once into the middle of his subject.

"In speaking to the subject, I recall the small boy fishing, who, when asked how many fish he'd caught, without taking his eye off the bob, responded, 'When I ketch this one an' two more I'll have three!' Ladies and gentlemen, I'm keeping my eye on the bob, and have great expectations!

"Seriously, ladies and gentlemen, you're goin' to

see the day when the sands an' shoals an' rocks which now make us dependent on our friend of the keel-boat" — smiling across the table at Millard, — "will all be removed from the river bed, an' a fleet of steamers will ply the waters between Keokuk and Fort Des Moines. The boys and girls under the trees yonder and these charmin' young ladies opposite to me will see the day when there will be a great big city where Captain Allen has planted his flag — an' that city will be the shippin' point for the grain and live-stock of the hull upper Des Moines valley. There ain't any big money, or immediate prospect of big money, in steamboatin' on the river just now; but I'm holdin' on by the gills, as you might say, in confident expectation that, now the Whigs has come into their own, with their scheme of internal improvements, Congress will make liberal appropriations for the development of navigation on the Des Moines.

"I'm no politician, an' I ain't goin' to spoil this occasion by springin' a political speech onto you friends; but I can't help sayin' before I take my seat that if you gentlemen ain't Whigs, you can't change your politics too quick, for it's dollars to you an' me, an' it means a whole lot to the country — this Whig scheme for developin' inland waterways."

After the hand-clapping had subsided, the squire facetiously assured the captain that "for the present at least," he might put down all the voters within the sound of his voice as Whigs; "for," he added,

"I think I can safely say that, to a man, we're for 'the old flag *and an appropriation*'!"

The pleasantry was vigorously applauded.

Mary Sinclair had patiently waited for the lieutenant to turn to her and resume conversation. Divining his mingled embarrassment and emotion, and sympathetically eager to relieve him, in an undertone she began:

"Mr. Woodruff, I want to call you back to earth by remarking, in all sincerity too, that your speech was a revelation to me. I am free to confess that until a few moments ago I regarded the soldier's calling with feelings akin to abhorrence. I can now see how a *man* can be a soldier. I want to thank you for letting light in on a dark place."

Millard, overhearing a few of the last words spoken by Mary, and mistaking her tribute of respect for mere compliment, reminded her of her father's confidence in her ability to "take the trick" — remarking that she could even dispense with her laugh, and still take the trick!

Mary's eyes flashed resentment and she hastily retorted:

"Mr. Millard, life is not a game of cards. I am sometimes serious! In this instance, I intended simply to confess my ignorance and to commend Mr. Woodruff for his noble stand for the rights of the weak."

The lieutenant's cheek flushed and, giving Mary a

searching glance which satisfied him as to her sincerity, he mildly expostulated:

"Miss Sinclair, you took my friend Millard's pleasantry all too seriously. To convince you that I at least appreciate your good words," —

By this time the irrepressible boatman had recovered from the setback he had received, and was doing his best to develop into a laugh the smile on Susan's face, when the toastmaster delivered himself of the following:

"Last but not least on our informal program is Commodore Millard, of the keel-boat squadron, his flag-ship lying at anchor in yonder cove — the one unfailing reliance of steamboat navigation on the Des Moines at the present time. We will now hear from the commodore."

Realizing his inability to make a speech, and yet, deeming himself equal to any emergency, Millard obtained permission of "the boss at the far end of the table" to tell a story that he had just begun to tell the squire's daughter. Permission was obtained and the riverman proceeded to relate his favorite story, describing the circumstances under which in his youth he had "jumped from a stage-coach box into a keel-boat." As he proceeded with his story, the boys on the grass, having long since been fed, by special order from the sympathetic Mrs. Sinclair, stole over to the opposite side of the table where they could get a good view of their stalwart hero and hear every word which fell from his lips.

Millard's long-drawn-out story, — too long to be included in this narrative, but full of humor and adventure, removed the little that was left of after-dinner conventionality.

With many a witty sally and retort, the party lingered at the table until the golden sunset and its crimson afterglow was melting into the deep blue of evening, and a lone star, in the western sky, looked down upon the party.

Mrs. Sinclair smilingly said, "Well, gentlemen —" and with that she rose, and the famous "banquet in the wilderness" was over.

The men took their chairs to a spot commanding a wider view of the river, where they could smoke their pipes at leisure and exhaust the several subjects suggested by the speeches.

Captain Allen was first to note the non-appearance of Lieutenant Woodruff. He smilingly remarked that his lieutenant had evidently surrendered before the firing of a gun! Asked to explain, he said he saw Miss Sinclair leading Woodruff off toward the rock yonder, and he seemed to be an extremely willing prisoner!

Expatiating on the beauty of the river valley, especially in the early evening, Mary had suggested that "Mr. Woodruff" follow her lead to her favorite resort, a rock projecting out into the river, a short distance from the Sinclair home.

The lieutenant eagerly followed Mary's lead, and gallantly helped her up the natural steps leading to

the point of observation. Reaching the miniature plateau, both stood for a moment entranced. Far down near the rounded curve of the highest hill beyond the river, the evening star shone brightly. Below the star hung a long line of crimson cloud, and above the cloud was spread a canopy of deepest blue.

"Isn't it beautiful!" exclaimed the young dreamer of dreams, impetuously clutching the soldier's sleeve.

Turning his gaze from the blue vault overhead to the sky-blue eyes upturned to his, the lieutenant could trust himself no farther than to repeat in undertone the word, "Beautiful!"

After gazing on the scene in silence, until the lone star lost itself in the deepening crimson, the two returned, Mary to assist her mother with the dishes; the lieutenant joining the group of smokers on the lawn.

An hour later, Mrs. Sinclair and her allies, having in mind the early breakfast they must prepare, turned their guests over to their respective "menfolks," gave each a cordial hand-clasp and good-night. She added a good-night for "the girls" and for "the women folks," saying, "I know you would excuse them if you could see the huge pile of dishes they've undertaken to wash and wipe and put away tonight."

Millard offered to help them, declaring he knew how and "would be only too glad to give 'em a lift in exchange for their society." But Mrs. Sinclair was sure he "would only be in the way."

CHAPTER VI

An Evening with Chief Ke-o-kuk

A breakfast by early candle-light and the four visitors, each escorted by his host for the night, hastily responded to the shrill whistle of the steamer many times repeated. The good-byes said were such as rarely pass between men whose acquaintance is limited to a few hours. To Adam Sinclair and his family the visit was destined to be the beginning of a new era.

The two crews, fresh from their much needed rest, were eager for action. As the Agatha with her satellite, the keel-boat, rounded the bend, just north of the landing, the gray dawn was made glorious to at least two of the voyageurs by a dimly outlined picture of two young women standing arm in arm on the low headland, each vigorously waving a handkerchief in response to the final good-byes of both officers and men.

As the trailing keel-boat was passing out of sight, the watchers on the bank were greeted with the words of the old song, sung by pioneer boatmen on the Ohio, beginning:

> The river is up, the channel is deep,
> The wind blows steady and strong,
> The splash of our oars the measures keep
> As we row the old boat along.

Early in the afternoon of their first day out, the voyageurs saw ahead of them a sandy island which, Captain Lafferty said, was entirely under water months before, when the Agatha made her first trip to the Forks. The center of the island was covered with a tangled mass of grass and weeds, set in a yellow-gray frame of sand.

The steamer effected a landing on the west bank, there to await the soundings of the keel-boatman.

On the more promising east side of the island a huge rock just below the surface nearly wrecked the keel-boat; but Millard's strength, readiness and skill, supplemented by the prowess of his polemen, saved the day.

The passage on the west side was found to be free from rocks; but the steamer, following in the wake of the keel-boat, ran aground on a sand-bar where, but for the combined operation of its jacks and the lift given it by the polemen she would have been compelled to await the rise of the river — a delay of possibly weeks, or even months.

The labored puffing of the engine and the loud "heave-o-heave" of "Boss" Millard as he steadied the push of his polemen, brought from the recesses of the forest a score or more of Indians, all naked to the waist. They stood curiously but stoically watching the noisy invaders of their solitude.

Captain Allen and Lieutenant Woodruff, feeling themselves of little or no service in this crisis, went

ashore to interview the Indians. As they approached, the red men shyly retreated to the woods. As they leisurely walked on up the river, the curious natives again came out into the open and stood silently watching the labors of the men.

The hard day was nearing its close before the Agatha, with her precious cargo, swung clear of the shallows. By that time the men of both crews had more than earned a good night's rest; and so the steamer was tied up for the night.

With a long evening before them, the two officers proposed to the two boat-captains that they pay their respects to Ke-o-kuk, the friendly chief of the Sacs and Foxes, whose temporary headquarters was only about a mile away, as they had learned from a young Indian who could speak a few words of English.

A hearty supper and an hour's rest renewed the strength and spirits of Lafferty and Millard and they gladly fell in with the suggestion. The young Indian was employed as guide and interpreter. Another, whose name interpreted was "The Fleet-footed," was dispatched ahead to inform his chief that the representative of the Government on the reservation would that evening call to pay his respects to the great chief of the Sacs and Foxes and that three of his associates would accompany him.

A tramp over a dried-out marsh and through tangled woods finally brought the little party out into an open space sloping down to a small river,

tributary to the Des Moines. Here grouped about the capacious wigwam of the chief, were perhaps two hundred smaller wigwams.

The messenger who had been sent on ahead advanced to meet them informing the interpreter that his chief had graciously consented to receive the Commandant of the Fort and his associates.

As the party approached, by a light from a huge bonfire in front of his wigwam, they saw Chief Ke-o-kuk deliberately rise from his blanketed throne, dignifiedly step down from his dais and slowly advance to receive them. With becoming solemnity he extended his hand to welcome the captain, who ceremoniously introduced the lieutenant and the two civilians. It was noticeable that the chieftain had duly fortified himself for the strain of the interview with a liberal potation — though he gave no evidence of actual intoxication.

In broken English, mechanically repeated and somewhat amplified by the interpreter, Ke-o-kuk bade each one welcome and assured the commandant that the significance of his mission to the reservation was fully comprehended, and that the kindly purpose of the Government was keenly appreciated.

Rude benches were brought for the visitors and the chief resumed his seat. Behind the four white men stood two hundred or more braves closely watching the proceedings, but evidently without comprehending a word that was said.

Ke-o-kuk asked Captain Allen to tell him of affairs in Washington and especially concerning the latest developments of the President's Indian policy. He also desired to know how far President Tyler would go in his avowed purpose to make up for ancient encroachments upon the property rights of his tribe. With this remark, a wave of passion swept across his face: but, with a deprecatory gesture, he resignedly added:

"I must forget what is past; I tell my braves we must look ahead."

As Captain Allen, with now and then a word of help from the interpreter, was rounding out discreetly diplomatic answers to Ke-o-kuk's searching questions, a young Indian was commanded to bring forward the pipe of peace. The pipe was passed along from the white men to the chief, and from the chief to the nearest one of his braves, who in turn, passed it on down the long line.

By the blaze of the replenished bonfire, the face and figure and even the expression on the face of this historic chief stood out with marked distinctness.

Ke-o-kuk was, in appearance as in mental grasp, an Indian of rare distinction. Among the several chiefs who six years before had visited Washington, New York and Boston, no other had to an equal degree commanded the admiration of President Jackson, Governor Everett, and other distinguished men in the East. With the added years he had grown

stouter and the processes of his mind had become slower, but he was still a splendid representative of his race, both physically and mentally.

While most of the braves in the background were naked to the waist, their chief, regardless of the lingering heat of the day, was attired for the occasion in the ceremonial garb in which, a few months before, he had presented himself before Indian Agent Street, as the representative of his tribe in arranging with General Street the terms of the recent treaty. Ke-o-kuk was nearly six feet in height, and his once muscular frame was now enveloped in a mass of flesh. His round, handsome face still wore a strong and determined expression, but along with it a suggestion of vanity which the superabundance of flesh accentuated.

The chief's dark eyes flashed with displeasure as young Ap-pa-noose, belated by the day's hunt and by his hasty toilet for the occasion, put in a tardy appearance. But, quickly recovering his wonted composure, the old chief rose and in his grand way presented Ap-pa-noose to each guest in turn.

The younger chief was even taller than Ke-o-kuk and was slender and agile. His name, signifying "a chief when a child," eminently befitted the man. Among his people, the Sacs, he was accounted generous, brave, athletic and a mighty hunter. Ap-pa-noose was naked to the waist, but a blanket was picturesquely hung over his left shoulder. On his right arm was a circlet composed of parallel rims of gold.

His neck and ears were profusely decorated with beads and on his small well-shaped head he wore a leathern skull-cap from which rose a tuft of red feathers, from which a lone eaglet-feather jauntily projected far to the left. Conspicuous upon his breast hung a medal, the gift of the Secretary of War, and at his side hung awkwardly the sword presented him by Governor Everett.

Ke-o-kuk's make-up for the occasion was far more elaborate. His head-gear was of unique pattern, gaily decorated with red, yellow and blue beads, from which rose, in front, a mass of wild-turkey feathers spreading out fan-shaped. The rich brown and black markings on the feathers blended with the vermilion red of the head-gear itself, toning down its gaudiness. Behind this frontal ornament projected a mass of eagle's feathers, their somber effect overcome by tips of downy plumes dyed crimson. He wore a full suit of buckskin, the shirt decorated with red, yellow and pale blue, squares within squares, a Greek cross in two colors constituting the central ornament in the decorative scheme. Around his ankles were red bands, bordered with white beads and heavily fringed. On his feet were well-fitting moccasins decorated with delicate traceries of wild flowers, and vines running backward and interlacing at the heel. Thrown over his right shoulder and wrapped around his capacious waist on the left was a startlingly red blanket with a wide black stripe. From his arms and legs hung fringes of

buckskin. The most conspicuous of the vain old chief's outward adornings was a necklace of eagle's claws. Between each claw were two large amber beads. But, more precious, evidently, than all his other adornings was a large gold medal proudly worn on his capacious breast, — the medal presented him by the Secretary of War on the occasion of his famous visit to Washington. Altogether, Chief Ke-o-kuk was an impressive personage, — a fact of which he was well aware.

A lapse into stately silence on the part of the great chief and the descending moon with its fast lengthening shadows, together warned the visitors that the incident was closed. Noting their purpose to return, Ke-o-kuk and Ap-pa-noose dignifiedly rose, and with a formal shake of the hand, thanked their guests for coming, bade them come again, and extended to each a friendly "Good-night." Four braves, detailed by their chief, escorted the party back to the landing.

The comments of the four on their distinguished host were widely variant. One pronounced Ke-o-kuk a splendid savage the like of whom they would never see again. Another thought him childishly vain, but withal a very interesting character-study. A third insisted "he couldn't hold a candle to Ap-pa-noose for good looks." The fourth rallied the other three on their insincerity, adding: "Why don't you come right out an' say what's in your mind? He's a grand old fraud and you know it." From this extreme con-

clusion all three dissented. Captain Allen happily closed the discussion by remarking:

"Gentlemen: I rule further debate out of order, and unless there is objection I will refer the subject to Miss Sinclair and Miss Susan, to whom I have given my word that at some time before Ke-o-kuk returns to his permanent headquarters down the river, they shall have an opportunity to meet him. I think you will agree with me — possibly better now than later" — this delicate thrust at Woodruff and Millard — "that the two young ladies are remarkably good judges of character!"

With a hearty laugh all around, the four turned in for the night.

CHAPTER VII

Peril

One Sunday afternoon, in the early summer of the following year, as Mary and Susan Sinclair were seated on the bluff overlooking the river, the younger reading aloud from a book, the older looking off into the blue space above the arched line of elms across the river, two half-naked Indians came staggering toward them from the winding path leading up from the landing, practically cutting off their retreat.

A look of consternation passed from one to the other. They recognized them as the two young Foxes who, a week before, had insultingly demanded that Mrs. Sinclair cook them a dinner and that the girls wait on them. Mrs. Sinclair had angered them by stepping outside and ringing the signal-bell, thereby conveying the impression that her stalwart husband was within hailing distance; whereas, in fact, he had gone to an afternoon service held at a little settlement on Camp Creek some eight miles away. The young bucks had retreated to the woods, — one of them delaying his flight long enough to shake his fist at the frightened women, muttering: "We git 'em" — pointing to her daughters.

All this came back to the girls as they faced the intruders.

The girls' presence of mind and physical courage, coupled with the muddled condition of the young bucks, saved the situation. Mary coolly rose, and, taking a few steps forward, invited their unwelcome guests to sit down.

They seated themselves uncomfortably near the girls, crossed their legs, and, each taking out his pipe, filled it from his pouch of tobacco, and, lighting it with a brand ignited by a flint, proceeded to puff tobacco smoke into their faces.

The older and larger Indian, leaning on his arm and eyeing Mary with a drunken leer, said:

"You know me — you know him. We come git you — un'stand?"

To divert him and delay the threatened violence, Mary inquired,

"Where do you live?"

"Over there," he answered pointing across and up the river. "Canoe up river. Come."

By this time, the younger Indian was nodding, the heat of the sun having reached his addled brain.

"You hungry?" tactfully inquired Mary of the one sitting near her. "We bring bacon — eggs — coffee."

The two beleagured girls rose to go: but the larger Indian reaching out his long arm, grabbed the now thoroughly frightened Mary by the ankle and attempted to pull her down by his side.

At this critical juncture, a dead limb which had fallen from a near-by tree, firmly wielded by Susan,

came crashing down upon the Indian's head, snapping as it fell. The Indian's grasp relaxed. His head sank to the ground and — the immediate danger was over.

The less formidable Indian slept on undisturbed.

The girls, trembling with fright, fled to the house. To their relief, they saw their father coming to meet them.

The squire summoned neighbor Byrnes, and the two hastened to the plateau, where they found the savages slowly recovering from their stupor. They disarmed and bound their prisoners, hands and feet, with a stout clothes-line, and left them to bake in the sun.

Finding the Indians' canoe, they paddled across the river, and, tramping two miles or more to the northwest, reached Ke-o-kuk's temporary headquarters. They were graciously received by the friendly chief, who, inviting them to be seated, listened attentively to their indignant recital.

Ke-o-kuk had evidently been drinking; but not enough to disturb his dignified calm. When they had finished their story, the chief sat for some time buried in thought. He then raised his head, and addressing his braves, with a grim suggestion of humor remarked:

"You see what whisky do! If anybody drink whisky, *I* drink it. *I* know when I drink 'nough."

Turning to two braves, he commanded them to go with the white men and bring the offenders back.

Then, shaking hands with his guests and thanking them for coming to him instead of shooting the young bucks as they deserved, he gravely remarked, "I fix 'em. You see. They no come no more. Serve 'em right. They keep this side river now."

CHAPTER VIII

Lieutenant Woodruff the Bearer of an Important Message

It was several weeks before the settlement at Sinclair's Point wholly recovered from the shock given them by the two drunken Indians. It was months before the women and children of the community ventured without protection beyond the precincts of their respective homes.

The close confinement was especially trying to Squire Sinclair's daughters, for, their home duties performed, their chief enjoyment had been found in roaming through the woods in intimate companionship with the birds and wild-flowers. They grew restless under restraint and had opened correspondence with the president of the Fairfield school-board with reference to an early return to their chosen work. Their mother was already well settled in her new home and had recovered her wonted strength.

One afternoon late in August, Mary sat reading in the shade of a great oak whose yellowing and reddening leaves told of the on-coming autumn, with its duty-call to service. Hearing the clatter of a horse's hoofs upon the clayey road leading to the house, she looked up from her book and saw approaching a tall, square-shouldered figure firmly seated upon an iron-

grey horse. A military salute established the identity of the visitor. She hastily rose and, with an unmistakable flush of pleasure on her face, walked rapidly to meet her unexpected guest.

"Why, Mr. Woodruff, what happy chance brings you to Sinclair's Point? And you come from the south! I saw you as you made the turn from the path through the woods into our roadway. You don't dare tell me you deliberately rode past us on your way down the river, — and that we were only an afterthought?"

With this rather elaborate attempt to hide her confusion, Mary cordially extended her hand.

The lieutenant alighted by her side and grasping the proffered hand unconsciously held it a moment longer than was really necessary to convey to his new-found friend his appreciation of the kindliness behind her rebuke. Becoming conscious of the fact, he too took refuge in a superfluity of words.

"I am delighted to find you at home," he began. "I heard something at Keokuk which made me fear I'd be too late."

"Too late for what? What does Keokuk know of me?" asked Mary quite mystified.

Paying no heed to her questions, the lieutenant continued:

"I did ride past you one evening about two weeks ago. I'm sure you must have been at least half-conscious of the battle I waged with inclination as I rode past. To shorten the struggle and put myself be-

yond temptation, I urged Old Grey to the top of his speed. And I might as well tell it all: after having won the battle, I was sorry I hadn't lost it! Fact is, I was due in Keokuk on a certain day, and I knew I couldn't make it unless I rode all night, making Fairfield next morning."

Mary considerately excused him with the trite remark that of course a soldier must obey orders. But, with a delightful inconsistency enjoyed by her guest, she commanded him never to repeat the offence.

As they neared the house, Susan made her appearance followed by the slower-moving maternal head of the family. They received the lieutenant with a degree of cordiality felt only by those who have known the isolation of pioneer life.

On learning that her guest could — or would — linger no longer than to sup with his friends, Mrs. Sinclair called Adam Junior from his work in the garden telling him to "run an' call Daddie in the field yonder, — tell him Lieutenant Woodruff's here to early tea an' if he wants to see him — an' I know he does — he'd better not wait till the supper-bell rings."

Turning to her guest she smilingly remarked that she'd ring the bell for Daddie now; but it would kind o' start him. The fact is he ain't never quite got over the scare a couple o' drunken Indians gave the girls a few weeks ago."

In a few minutes the squire appeared, his rugged face red and dripping with perspiration.

"Glad to see you, Lieutenant, — mighty glad," was his hearty greeting, accompanied by a hand-grasp that would have made an ordinary man wince. "What's this I hear about your goin' on to the Fort to-night? Now, say, one night can't make any difference. You ain't as necessary as all that! I'll rout you out at five to-morrow mornin' — or earlier if you want me to. You can ride all the faster in the cool of the mornin' — what d'you say?"

The lieutenant, smiling grimly and thanking the squire for his hospitality, insisted that he was under orders and must report to Captain Allen early the next morning. The fact was, he added, that he would have to pay for his self-indulgence in staying to tea, by a long moonlight ride: but he didn't mind that: he was only too glad to pay the price.

A bountiful supper followed. The hungry traveler greatly pleased his hostess by his profuse apologies for the number of hot biscuits he had eaten. The group then adjourned to the grass-plot in front of the house, Mrs. Sinclair having directed the girls to let the dishes go till later.

When the pipes were lighted, the squire broached the subject of politics, asking the lieutenant what they thought down there in Keokuk about President Tyler's Mexican policy, adding that it looked to him, from what little he had heard and read, as though Tyler was "squarin' for a fight."

The lieutenant said he was sorry to have to agree with the squire; but, as he must go in a few minutes,

he would have to change the subject and at once get down to business.

"The fact is," he continued, "I'm the bearer of an important message from Captain Allen. I'm commissioned by the commandant of the post to present a situation and propose a remedy — *the* remedy."

Every member of the family — except the youngest who was dozing on his mother's lap — was consumed with curiosity. The bearer of the message with exasperating deliberation refilled his pipe, lighted it, pressed the tobacco down with his finger, gave a few whiffs and then, pipe in hand, resumed:

"To begin at the beginning, as you may know, our dragoons were speedily reinforced by a company of infantry that marched across country from the upper Mississippi. Soon Lieutenant Grier sent for his family — including several children. The garrison tailor, the blacksmith, the storekeeper, the trader across the river, and several local builders and contractors for garrison supplies and a few non-commissioned officers and privates brought their families soon as possible, and, almost before we realized the fact, we had a community life of our own — and no school for the little folks.

"To cut a long story short," he continued, after looking at his watch, "the morning I started for Keokuk, Captain Allen took me aside and said: 'Lieutenant, on your way back I want you to stop at the Sinclairs and tell them their two daughters must come to Fort Des Moines as early in September

as possible, and organize a school. Tell them I'll find them a comfortable home and I'm building a two-room cabin for their school. They needn't worry about the number of pupils they're likely to have, and they needn't have a moment's uneasiness about where the money's coming from, for I'm behind the scheme and the Government's behind me. Tell the young ladies I'll engage to pay them some more than they got in Fairfield — perhaps considerably more. Tell them I'll personally guarantee that they'll be treated with the utmost respect and consideration by my men; and, if they're sick, they'll be treated by Post Surgeon Griffin without charge and with as good care as though they were his own daughters. Tell them I'll promise them a growing school made up of as bright a lot of boys and girls as the country affords. Impress upon them the fact that this is real frontier missionary work and that it's their duty to come to us, and if they come — and they *must* come — we'll all try to make their duty a pleasure to them'."

On relieving himself of this well-conned speech, the lieutenant self-complacently primed his pipe and began to puff with vigor, as if making up for lost time.

The girls looked at each other and at their parents with mingled gratification and consternation. All looked pleased except the youngest auditor, "Bobbie," who, now wide awake, began to cry, comprehending enough to realize that the call to service

which had come to his sisters meant that he would soon lose them out of his life.

The lieutenant resumed: "I forgot to say that Captain Allen didn't expect you would say yes at once; but he must know your decision very soon.

"Just one word for the captain's more than willing messenger and I'm off," said the lieutenant, formally rising from his seat and putting away his pipe. "I very much hope Miss Sinclair and Miss Susan will heed the Macedonian cry and come over and help us."

Satisfied that he had said the appropriate thing, and convinced by the pleased expression on the faces of the young ladies that his coming had not been in vain, he formally shook hands with every member of the family, even unbending to kiss Bobbie's tear-stained face; then, leaping into his saddle, with a parting salute he rode away.

CHAPTER IX

Advent of the Pioneer School-Teachers of Fort Des Moines

A beautiful September day smiled on the advent of the two young women who were to figure in future annals as the pioneer educators of Fort Des Moines. Democratic simplicity marked their coming. It was late in the afternoon when they arrived at Postmaster Bryant's, opposite the Fort, on the east side of the Des Moines. The sisters sat at the left of their father on a board seat in his big lumber wagon. Underneath the seat was the capacious hair-trunk which had accompanied Adam Sinclair and his bride on their overland journey from the far east to Ohio and which, later, had followed them over the line into Indiana, and thence, years later, across the State of Illinois and into Iowa Territory. The rear end of the wagon was filled with freshly dug potatoes long promised the commissary sergeant at the garrison.

Several shirt-sleeved men from the farms roundabout rose from the bench in front of the post-office and took off their hats as a special mark of respect for "the squire's han'some girls." The squire kept his seat, but his daughters sprang to the ground, eager to rest their limbs after the long, slow ride.

"Neighbors," said Adam with a self-satisfied expression on his face, "That's my youngest girl, Susan, and this is my oldest girl, Mary. They've come on Captain Allen's invitation to open a school at the Forks."

Then, pointing with his whip-stock to a tall, thin, full-bearded man in the group, he said, "Girls, I want you to know my old friend Newcomer: you've heard me tell of Peter Newcomer."

With unaffected cordiality the two advanced and were greeted with a hand-shake all around which would have made them wince had they not grown accustomed to the rough heartiness of the pioneers. Undaunted and smiling they moved along down the line grasping each horny hand with genuine regard for their father's friends and neighbors — for in the Forties all residents of the upper Des Moines valley were accounted neighbors.

Having run the friendly gauntlet, they joined the thirsty horses in drinking at the trough. They drank in the good old fashion of their childhood, a fashion handed down from the days "when Adam delved and Eve span." Then, unembarrassed by her audience, Susan took from a work-bag on her arm a small clothes-brush and proceeded to give her sister a vigorous brushing. With like freedom from embarrassment, Mary then took the brush and returned the favor with interest.

Their audience complimented them on their thoroughness, friend Newcomer promising to recom-

mend them to the unmarried men of his neighborhood.

With a cheery laugh Mary begged him not to carry out his threat, adding, "We're looking for trouble, but not of that kind."

"Come, girls," said the squire, and, before the slow-moving Peter could come to their assistance, they were again seated by their father's side, and waving good-byes to their new-found friends.

They were soon fording the then shallow river — shallow in advance of the belated fall rains. At one point the water invaded the wagon-box. Like little girls they drew their feet up under them and clung to their father, laughing and screaming at every jolt of the wagon.

On reaching the west shore, they became impressed with their new responsibility and with the new dignity which they would be expected to maintain. But, finding Captain Allen and Lieutenant Woodruff smilingly waiting to receive them, all embarrassment disappeared. The young lieutenant stepped forward to assist the ladies from the wagon; but Captain Allen, with affected sternness, commanded his subordinate to fall back. Then, stepping to the front, he gallantly lifted them to the porch.

Even the Governor of the Territory and his family could not have been received with more marked civility than the two gallant officers bestowed upon Squire Sinclair and his daughters. No king in his palace could have been prouder than was the father

of the two unworldly-wise young women, who, now fully conscious of their womanhood, unaffectedly and yet with keen appreciation, accepted the homage paid them as their right.

After a brief rest with light refreshments, Adam Sinclair mounted his wagon and drove to the commissary department to deliver his potatoes. The prospective teachers eagerly accepted an invitation to inspect the new school building. Briefly explaining the general plan of the garrison, — and incidentally commending Lieutenant Woodruff for drawing and working out the plan, — the captain led the prospective teachers to the log cabin which was to be the scene of their activities in the new missionary field to which they had been called.

The building was on the edge of the woods a few hundred yards west of headquarters.

There it was in actual fact — the palace of their dreams! When the two for the first time stood in front of the rude structure, Mary grasped her sister's hand and, leaning her head upon the sympathetic Susan's shoulder, gave way to tears of joy.

Moved by this unanticipated show of feeling, the two men strayed away toward the woods to the south, presumably to talk over other building projects, but, in reality, to give the impressionable young women time to recover their self-possession.

When the sisters joined them, Captain Allen with outward solemnity presented the elder of the two with the keys of the building, "in the name of the

Government of the United States and of the citizens of the State, present and prospective, who reside or in future shall reside on the Sac and Fox reservation.''

Mary caught the spirit of mock seriousness in which the words were uttered and smiled through her tears. Susan, taking the captain seriously, listened to the formal words with profound emotion. Taking the keys from Mary, she opened the door on the right and entered — as a queen might have entered the palace prepared for her by her king, — with unaffected dignity and pleased expectancy. Mary seemed to be looking for some retreat in which she might hide her unwilling tears.

The new structure — ''Barracks No. 26'' on the new plat of the garrison, though in no sense a barracks — had the usual covered passage-way between the two rooms of the double-log cabin. The practical Susan at once saw that this passage-way could be utilized in pleasant weather for recitations. Open only at the south, in stormy weather it would be shielded from the prevalent storms. Mary remarked on the ease with which, in pleasant weather, either one could sit in the passage-way and command the situation in both compartments.

They passed on into the east room followed by the two officers. With quick glances they took in every detail, — the puncheon floor's smooth surface, as flat and smooth as broad-axe and plane could make it; glass window panes, instead of the oiled paper of the

period; window-sash that could actually be raised and lowered; chairs of birch intertwined with willow wisps, and a substantial table in the center, made, as they were informed, by a dragoon who had run away from an apprenticeship with a Burlington cabinet-maker.

Completing a hasty survey of the interior, Mary grasped the captain's hand, and with beaming eye and flushed face exclaimed:

"Captain Allen, we can't begin to tell you how grateful we are for all you've done for us."

Susan added:

"But most of all for the opportunity you've given us for service — real service and in an absolutely new field."

"And, O, Captain Allen," continued Mary, "I do so hope you'll not expect too much of us!"

The captain, now thoroughly embarrassed, arbitrarily changed the key by saying:

"Let me show you the other half of the building."

Then, noting that the sun was setting and the supper hour was nearing, he added:

"But you surely must be tired by this time — and the school-house will keep till Monday."

Happening to look out of the north window, he continued:

"See where your father and the commissary sergeant are unloading your trunk. That's the home we've picked out for you. The good, kind woman who lives there — Mrs. Cameron — is a soldier's widow

— the only widow in our little community. You'll find she has a gentle, mothering way — though she's far from old, — regarding her from *my* standpoint of years. (Smiling.) She's been on the look-out for you for days. You'll find she already has the tea-kettle on the stove and is wondering why you don't follow your trunk."

With that, the four moved up the roadway to Mrs. Cameron's boarding house. Mary dropped back, joining the somewhat overshadowed and neglected lieutenant. Finding the young man preoccupied, as was her wont she hid her embarrassment behind a formidable array of words. She began:

"Mr. Woodruff, will you please tell me where our school children are to come from? I haven't seen a child anywhere! How many children does the captain expect to rally? Do you think they'll like us? — They can't help liking sister; but — O you needn't say anything at this point; I can see how embarrassing it might be. The awful thought arises, just suppose we should fail! — But, please dismiss that subject too, for, speaking for Susan I can truthfully say that if the word 'fail' happens to be in her dictionary, she's never found it."

Out of breath, Mary paused a moment for a new supply, when the lieutenant, quite nonplussed, tamely remarked:

"I know, my dear Miss Sinclair, you don't expect me either to answer all your questions or to remove all your doubts. Let me, however, give a general

answer. Permit me to say I haven't the slightest doubt but that your question of fact — as to the success of the Captain's rally — will be answered satisfactorily at nine o'clock next Monday morning; and that you yourself, with the aid of your extremely capable sister, will speedily work out right answers to the weightier problems embodied in your other questions."

Following up the advantage gained by Mary's confusion and his own cleverness, the lieutenant made bold to ask the privilege of calling Sunday afternoon. Consent obtained, he went further, offering to guide the sisters through the grove of giant elms around the river-bend to the north — his favorite walk. With a promising degree of intimacy thus early established, the lieutenant self-complacently joined the captain on his way back to headquarters.

Mrs. Cameron was eagerly watching out for her "lady-boarders." Without waiting for formal introduction, she grasped the extended hands, placed them together between her capacious palms and gave each a loud-resounding kiss.

"Come right in the front room and make yourselves to home! There's your trunk, see, all unstrapped for you. Now I want you both to feel this is your home. I ain't got a chick or child in the world, and the men-folks that board here ain't any company except at meal-time, and I've got a big place in my heart for you both."

There was a home-y atmosphere about the place.

The front room turned over to them was plainly but comfortably furnished. In one corner was a four-poster bedstead, and over the well-rounded bed was spread a counterpane of quaint design. In another corner was a combination couch and chest, the handiwork of Mrs. Cameron's lamented soldier-husband. Near the head of the bed was a small table and above it hung a mirror — to the new occupants not the least of the room's attractions.

But in their rapid inventory, the item which gave them most satisfaction was the melodeon. On entering the room Mary's eyes rested on it first. The happy grown-up girl gave a scream of delight, which was followed by a prolonged "O!" from Susan.

"You don't mean to say you're going to leave this in our room!" exclaimed Mary as she sat down and began to work the pedals and thrum the keys.

Mrs. Cameron burst into tears. The two rushed to her side to comfort her, Mary piteously exclaiming, "O Mrs. Cameron! What have we said — what have we done!"

Recovering herself their hostess with forced calmness explained:

"You couldn't know — you couldn't be expected to know — what I was cryin' about. I'll tell you. That was the last present *he* made me. After he was taken away from me somehow I couldn't touch it without cryin'. So I moved it into this spare room where I couldn't see it quite so often. I had a chance to sell it to Lieutenant Grier when his wife come on;

but, somehow, I couldn't bring myself to part with it. I'd been wonderin' whether the new school ma'ams would begrudge the room it took; and when I see how glad you was to find it in your room, I just burst out cryin' for joy!

"Well, now, girls, what do you think; I forgot all about supper, and I jest know you're hungry as bears. Excuse me," — and with that she retreated toward the kitchen, her last word being, "Sing somethin', girls, I can hear you from where I'm workin' in the kitchen. Can't you sing some of the old hymns they used to sing when I was a member in good standin'? Somehow I ain't had any heart for singin' ever since," — and without finishing the sentence she passed on into the kitchen, brushing a tear from her eye with the back of her hand.

Left alone Susan seated herself at the melodeon and, with Mary standing over her, the two sang several of the old hymns learned in their childhood. As they concluded the second stanza of the old Welsh hymn, "Guide me O, thou great Jehovah!" they were delighted to hear their father's powerful — but somewhat uncertain — bass, well-nigh drowning their soprano and alto, uniting with them in the well known refrain:

> Strong deliverer! Strong deliverer!
> Be thou still my strength and shield!

Thus happily began the new career of Mary and Susan Sinclair in the little community clustered about Fort Des Moines.

CHAPTER X

Auspicious Opening of the Pioneer School of Fort Des Moines

Simply mentioning in passing the affectionate parting of the father with his daughters as he started on his moonlight ride home; the daughters' blissfully long-drawn-out sleep in the downy bed by the open window with its cool breeze from the prairie; the combined breakfast and dinner by special arrangement with the indulgent housekeeper; the Sunday afternoon walk, with Lieutenant Woodruff as guide, along the low river bank, now in the glaring sunlight, and now under the shade of giant elms casting fan-shaped shadows far out into the water, — let us look in upon one of the really important events, — heretofore unchronicled — in the history of the little community in which Mary and Susan Sinclair had cast their lot and in which they were destined to find their mission — and themselves.

Word had gone forth that the teachers were on the ground, and that the long anticipated school would open on the following Monday morning at nine o'clock.

Long before the hour, the teachers were there ready for service. They caught the youthful soldier,

detailed as janitor of the building, and speedily captured him, hypnotically turning the drudgery he had despised into a delightful service.

As the ninth hour approached, and no pupils appeared, the old fear came back to them. "Suppose no one — or only two or three — should come!" Each looked at the other inquiringly, appealingly: but said nothing. They had performed their part of the contract: they could not be blamed for the failure — but O, the chagrin of it!

Looking down the "street," they beheld a tall, gaunt youth making long strides school-ward. They noted that he was bare-footed; wore on the back of his head a faded tan-colored cap with the front-piece turned up. He wore no coat, and his trousers were held high by a pair of hand-knit suspenders. Under his arm was a package, evidently composed of school-books and slate. As this uncouth creature passed the east window and saw the two fair faces in the background, his dull, pale-blue eyes lighted with a smile dispelling fear.

Unabashed and with a directness hardly anticipated, the unpromising youth stopped at the entrance, looked from right to left, turned to the right and entered. Removing his cap and revealing a wealth of yellow hair, he turned to Mary and inquired:

"Air you Miss Sinclair? I s'pose you air?"

On being assured he had made no mistake, he proceeded with the utmost self-confidence to state his

case, evidently having well thought out the speech he would make. He began:

"My name is James Thompson — but around home they call me Jim Thompson. Dad works fer the Saylors — you must know the Saylors on the Beaver Creek road, jest north a few miles. Dad's agreed to let me come to school this winter, if I'll pitch in an' learn to cipher. Will you take me on?"

Assured that his would be the first name entered on their roll, Jim proceeded:

"You'll be su'prised to find how little I know 'bout books, an' mebbe you'll be su'prised to find I know a lot 'bout things that ain't in books. You see I was only a baby when our folks come over from Illinoy; and Dad hain't had no time — nor Ma neither — to teach us the little they'd learned out o' books. Dad says by the time the ice goes out next spring, I must know how to do sums. He's given me my choice 'tween bein' a hired man on a farm an' a deck-hand on a steamboat."

"Well, which is it to be?" asked Susan.

"O, deck-hand," was the ready answer. "You're penned in like a pig when you're on a farm; but on a steamboat you see the world. *I* know: I took a ride up the river a ways last Fourth of July."

"How old are you, James?" asked Mary.

"Goin' on seventeen," he promptly replied.

"You mustn't be discouraged, or the least bit ashamed, if you have to read and recite with very young children — provided we have any," said

Susan, looking out of the window to see if any were coming.

"I can't see nothin' to be ashamed of," was the youth's prompt answer. "If I'd a' had a chance to learn and hadn't learnt, then I *would* be ashamed of myself."

"I'm glad you're so sensible, James," responded Susan, "You and I'll get on well together; I can see that."

At this point, Mary, who had been looking down the road, gleefully exclaimed, "Here come some children, Susan!"

She started for the entrance, followed by Jim.

While she waited, Jim surveyed the premises.

"Say, teacher," said he, "you won't mind, would you, if I brung a sickle with me to-morrow, an' cut the weeds an' grass?"

"I hadn't noticed them yet; but I'll be so glad, and so grateful for anything you do to make the school a pleasant place for the little folks."

They were actually coming — the children seen in Mary's dreams!

They came — one by one, in pairs arm in arm, and in groups — twenty-one in all, counting Jim! Except two or three children of the officers, all were barefooted. The girls wore calico dresses; the boys linsey shirts tucked into linsey "snickers." The girls wore sun-bonnets; the boys, home-made caps. Among them were a few decidedly unpromising children; but, with these exceptions, the sun-browned

faces that frankly met the inquiring glances of the teachers were delightfully reassuring, giving the anxious young women abundant promise of many happy days in their new employment.

On this first day, the children were all crowded into the east room, — the boys carrying in chairs from the other room. With the exception of Jim, who sat in the doorway, the pupils ranged themselves around the center table, to await the trying-out process.

Before the children dispersed for the day, they were tentatively assigned — the more advanced in the east room with Mary in charge; the less advanced — the more numerous — under Susan's care in the west room.

With an easily memorized verse from a song of cheer, in which all — not excepting Jim — enthusiastically took part, the first day of school in the little log school-house near the Fort passed into memory — a precious memory still to the children and grandchildren of those who on that glorious September day took a new start toward manhood and womanhood under the inspiration of two high-souled young missionaries of culture.

Interesting as the story might be to those whose ancestors were among the twenty-one gathered in the little log-school-house, this narration is more concerned with the larger life of the community and of the valley to which the reader has already been introduced, and more especially with the heart-life of

some of those who have been brought to the foreground in preceding chapters.

Suffice to say that as the weeks passed the school grew in numbers and its pupils in knowledge and in appreciation of the two rare souls into whose keeping they had happily been placed.

CHAPTER XI

An Indian Scare

Going back to the winter of 1843-44; it bore down heavily upon the now numerous pioneers on the old reservation. But for the foresight and energy of Captain Allen, the increasingly dependent Indians on the new reservation would have fared even worse than the settlers.

About two hundred Sacs and Foxes with the persistency of a cat for his former habitat, had gone back to the old reservation supplementing their hunting and fishing by "friendly calls" on the provident settlers.

Several score of these nomads camped in the woods along the little river, several miles northeast of Sinclair's Point, where they passed the winter hunting and trapping the fur-bearing animals abounding in the Checaqua valley.

One day in December, a dozen or more Indians accompanied by their squaws and papooses came fleeing from out the woods on the north, and threw themselves upon the protection of the little community, excitedly announcing that their ancient foe, the Sioux, were in hot pursuit.

They united in urging the whites to flee for their lives, insisting that the Sioux would kill, pillage and burn.

The women and children were herded in the Sinclairs' double-cabin and were supplied by the thrifty pioneers with an abundance of food and a cask of water, in provision for a prolonged siege.

The men made a barricade of cord-wood piled high around the cabin and connecting with the Sinclair barn. In the barn were huddled the squaws and papooses, the Indians helping the white men pile the cord-wood.

A succession of war-whoops came from the distant woods along the river intensifying the fear of the women and children and stimulating the activities of the men.

With two rifles and a brace of pistols for every man, with an abundance of ammunition, and with several women of the number who could reload as fast as their husbands could fire, it became evident to the supposedly friendly Indians that there would be a stubborn defense against the foe should he materialize.

After the Indians had been duly fed, they settled down for the night with a calmness which raised a suspicion as to the genuineness of their alarm. Some of the defenders even went so far as to declare the shots from the woods were only part of a scheme of the Indians to frighten the settlers away, that they might take possession of the community's winter store of food.

After a sleepless night for most of the women and a night of unceasing vigilance on the part of the men,

— with nothing more alarming than a distant shot from the woods in the direction of the river, — an early morning council of the men was held, and the consensus of opinion was that the Indians, still sleeping soundly on the hay in the barn, were frauds and deserved to be kicked out of the barricade.

One of the men in council, an irascible Scotchman named Stephenson, a newcomer, more clamorous for his breakfast than the rest, could not be restrained from visiting his wrath upon the first Indian who emerged from the barn.

The Indian, with fine dignity and fierce scorn, turned and walked away. His squaw, who could speak English, indignant but disposed to be conciliatory, declared with many a white man's oath, that the Sioux had actually come upon their party in great numbers and had pursued them as far as the roadway leading from the military road to the settlement.

By this time, the Indians, men, women and children, were all out and the women in the house were scurrying about, preparing breakfast for the improvised garrison — including the suspected strangers.

Then, without warning, a tragedy occurred. Noting the skepticism with which their story had been received, the Indian whose air of offended dignity had almost persuaded his irascible accuser that he at least was innocent, returned and vehemently charged the original alarm upon his squaw. This she indignantly resented. Drawing a long knife the enraged squaw made a vicious lunge at her accuser. He deftly

parried the blow with his right arm. She retreated to the barn. He angrily followed. Grabbing the knife from her hand, he plunged it into her back. She fell upon the hay where she had lain by her husband's side, and before Adam Sinclair could come to her aid, she was dead.

The murderer fled through an opening made in the barricade, pursued by his indignant comrades. Shots were fired, a stray bullet slightly wounding the fleeing Indian with the result that he was captured and brought back to the stockade. He still bore himself with the dignity of injured innocence.

The unique punishment the Indians meted out to the wife-murderer was that he himself, unassisted, should carry the body of the murdered woman back to the camp on the Checaqua, and that he must then turn three ponies over to the surviving relatives of the deceased as compensation for the killing of their kinswoman!

The tragedy did not affect the well-organized appetite of the community's guests. Even the murderer ate ravenously of the breakfast set before him.

It was a strange procession that filed out of the stockade that forenoon. At its head marched with firm tread the unrepentent murderer, bearing upon his broad shoulders the limp body of the murdered squaw.

Though increasingly skeptical about the Sioux, the settlers maintained their barricade until spring — more as a protection from their "friends," the Sacs and Foxes, than from the hostile Sioux.

CHAPTER XII

The Prairie Belle Takes on Two Interesting Passengers

Early in May, 1844, the little school at the garrison took a two weeks' vacation, and its teachers spent the all-too-brief period at home, assisting the mother with her spring house-cleaning and, as the squire expressed it, "sewing up the whole family for the summer campaign."

One Sunday noon, the last day of their vacation, as the sisters were seated at their favorite point of observation on the rock overlooking the river, to their surprise they saw Charlie Millard's big keelboat, "The Prairie Belle," (named by Millard after a river-boat, the burning of which he had described at "the banquet in the wilderness"), with its dozen stalwart polemen, rounding the point and headed for the landing.

Regardless of the effect it might have on the susceptible super-cargo, the sisters greeted the incoming boatmen with the sentimental old song beginning:

Go softly, go safely, O boat of my lover.

When the last note fell upon the eager ears of the tired polemen, they halted long enough to give

"three cheers for the Sinclairs of Sinclair's Point and three more for Fort Des Moines."

The sisters ran to the landing, and boarding the boat, gave every man, from supercargo to cook, a generous hand-shake and an offer of the hospitality of the settlement.

Millard made haste to decline the offer, and, when pressed for a reason, laughingly explained:

"You see, it's this way: I ain't the man to ride a free horse to death. You may remember I've been here before."

"But the men?" inquired Susan, "Now, wouldn't they enjoy sitting down at a home table once more?"

Charlie playfully replied:

"Like as not: but, you see they ain't exactly dressed for high life an' they wouldn't feel quite comfortable; an' then again, they ain't got the claim I've got. You know *I'm* an old acquaintance of the family!"

"You're not working your claim very hard, Mr. Millard," put in Mary.

But the supercargo insisted upon "grubbing" with his men. He could get a much earlier start in the morning if he was on the spot at the first cock-crow.

At this point the Sinclairs' dinner-bell rang and the conference closed. In the afternoon word went round through the neighborhood, and an informal reception was held on the boat in which every man, woman and child at "the Point" participated.

In the course of conversation on the boat, Millard jokingly remarked to Mary Sinclair:

"It was mighty good of you both to come all the way down from the Fort to meet me!"

"Wasn't it!" responded Mary, laughing heartily at the boatman's self-complacency.

The audacious invite audacity. Taking advantage of the opening given, Mary coolly asked:

"How do you imagine we're going back to the Fort to-morrow? You can't guess, so I'll answer for you. Father expected to take us in his lumber wagon: but I've decided we'll take the river route! It really was providential — your happening along to-day. Captain Millard, kindly book the Misses Sinclair for passage on the Prairie Belle from Sinclair's Point to Fort Des Moines."

Millard laughed loud and long, and his crew — even the cook — laughed with him.

Finding Mary "in dead earnest," and Susan only mildly expressing fear that the "lady passengers" might be in the way, Millard assured the two that he would be delighted to take them on, and if they would report by early cock-crow he would agree to land them at the Fort early Monday evening — "barrin' accidents of course."

Noting the chop-fallen look on the cook's face, Susan assured Mr. Campbell that he needn't give a moment's thought to their dinner and supper on the boat, for Mother Sinclair, supposing father would drive them to town, had already filled a big basket

with cold chicken, bread and butter and pumpkin pie and would, she knew, insist on their taking it along. She promised him a big piece of pie if he would let them have their own way in the matter.

Before sun-up next morning, the Prairie Belle with its light load of freight and its precious burden of femininity was well on its way up the Des Moines. On each side of the happy pilot sat a young woman attentively listening to stories of adventure and at the same time intently gazing on the panorama slowly moving past them.

The virgin beauty of it all! The heavily timbered bottoms and the pale green rolling prairie stretching far to the west, with here a patch of pink and there another of blue, and beyond a mound of purple and gold, — for the early wild flowers had seemingly come out in a night; the rocky bluffs on the east decorated with columbine and fringed with nodding prairie-grass — all as luxuriantly wild as when, early in the century, the adventurous Faribault made his canoe voyage down the river.

In the gloom of early morning the black oaks, rioting in the rich bottom-land and extending far up the slopes, seemed like vast herds of buffaloes following their leaders up from the river to the plateau beyond.

As the Prairie Belle wound in and out and around the river's graceful curves, to the imaginative passengers, unwilling to lose any phase of the shifting scene, the boat seemed to be passing from one small

lake to another, each possessing a distinctive beauty of its own.

As they passed on up the river, the water in a tributary creek on the right, swollen by a "cloudburst" the night before, was seen to be rushing down the narrow gorge, a miniature torrent, carrying bushes and trees before it. The jutting cliffs on both sides of the glen threw cooling shadows far out into the river. Later, the boat pushed on into an oval lake, a tranquil picture set in a sun-illumined frame of gently sloping meadow, the frame decorated with anemone, hypatica and violets. Farther on they observed with new delight the picture framed by a row of yellow-green willows, the slender limbs drooping to the water's edge, the sun penetrating the filigree of their stems and budding leaves.

The flight of a stag, the play of a squirrel with its mate, the leap of a fish out of water, the ascent of a covey of ducks, the swaying of an Indian canoe, — a lone Indian fisherman in his canoe anchored in midstream, — were the only signs of life in all that beautiful expanse.

The recent rains had enabled the boat to make the trip without mishap or delay, and, having safely rounded Rattlesnake Bend, Millard breathed freer; for, deeply impressed with a sense of responsibility for the safe delivery of his precious cargo, he had had an almost superstitious dread of the unexpected. Unwontedly silent most of the day, as evening ap-

proached and he could see "where the Fort ought to be," much of his old-time garrulity returned.

Late in the afternoon, after having taken a hand at cordelling along the right bank, he returned to the tiller and called his guests' attention to the deepening effect of the sunlight upon the mist rising from the upper river beyond the curve to the west.

"Watch it, an' see it grow pink an' then red. An' while you're watchin' jest imagine all Fort Des Moines lookin' up at it, for that's where it lies. — See! there's the flag wavin' a welcome to you. Yes, an' there's the front row of cabins! Do they look good to you? They do to me. Whenever I see 'em I think o' Cap Allen an' Lieutenant Woodruff an' the rest. God never put up a better job than when he made Cap Allen — unless it was when he made that young lieutenant o' his'n."

As he made this allusion to Woodruff, he glanced at Mary and observed that though she was looking off into vacancy, the blood was rushing to her telltale cheeks.

The day's trip had been glorious. It was now becoming exciting. The sisters paced back and forth in the little unoccupied space near the tiller, asking many questions and scarcely waiting for answers.

All day Millard had held himself well in check, determined that while the girls were his guests nothing should be done or said which might be construed by them into an attempt to take undue advantage of his opportunity and of their obligation to him.

"Once more on neutral ground — on shore," said he to himself, "I'll make up for lost time." There was, however, much method in his restraint, for so enthusiastically did he admire the "blue bird" and the "brown thrush" of precious memory that he deliberately planned to put in all his spare time that day studying the two in the hope to discover which one would be most to him "with the other dear charmer away." It had not yet occurred to him that both might like him too well to fall in love with him!

Lieutenant Woodruff had spent most of the day in his cabin drafting plans for the bridges he had been commissioned to build over creeks which in times of flood were wont to cut off approaches to the Fort by both the east and the south road. After supper he was pacing back and forth along the river when he espied the well known outline of the Prairie Belle. He saluted the boat but received no response. He sat down on the bank near the landing, and, refilling his pipe, waited a nearer approach.

Later, — he could hardly trust his eyes, — he plainly saw standing near the stern, two female figures, each with a hand raised to protect her eyes from the low-slanting sun. He ran to his cabin and procured his field-glass. By its aid he could see that the man at the tiller was telling a story with evident enjoyment of the interest shown by his auditors. There was no mistaking the identity of the group. Somehow, the audacious Charlie had made willing captives of the two "schoolma'ams" and was doing

his best to while away the last hour of their captivity!

Through his strong glass he could even see the self-complacent smile on his friend's beaming countenance and the pleased expression on the faces of his auditors. As the evening breeze boldly outlined the two shapely figures against the crimson reflection of the now gorgeous sunset, he frantically swung his hat in air, but the signal evoked no response. He swung it again, and a pantomime ensued. Mary had seen the man on shore wildly gesticulating and was standing still intently watching the strange demonstration. Finally she recognized the man behind the signal. In a moment her handkerchief was waving frantically. Susan, also convinced, joined her sister in signaling the man on the shore. Millard shouted a far-resounding "hello," which was vigorously answered.

The polemen, their poles firmly set against their shoulders, almost walked on their hands as well as their feet in their eagerness to make the landing: but, at the fastest, a keel-boat is only a keel-boat and proverbially slow.

Finally, as the golden glory in the west melted into a purple haze, the boat landed, and Mary and Susan, not waiting for the gang-plank, jumped ashore. The lieutenant, overjoyed, tried hard to curb his inclination, that there might not be even the appearance of partiality in his relations with the sisters.

Millard hugged the lieutenant and invited himself

to a bed-time lunch and smoke with him that evening. Noting his friend's confusion, he thus severely took him to task:

"What are you thinking about, Woodruff? See them packages?" pointing to the capacious lunch-basket (now containing nothing but plates and spoons) and to a closely packed "carpet-bag" which served on the trip as a trunk for both the sisters. "The girls know enough to git home without bein' carried: but the packages 'll have to be carried by somebody. I'd take 'em myself, but I've got to help the boys unload, for they're off tomorrow mornin' early. The girls 'll show you the way if you've forgot it."

When he saw how awkward the lieutenant was with the basket in one hand the carpet-bag in the other, his loyalty to his men weakened, and seizing the bag, he led the way exclaiming:

"Come, Sue!" — for on the trip he had ventured so far as to obtain from both his passengers permission to "call 'em by their front names." The two trudged on ahead, followed in the gathering darkness by the partially domesticated soldier with Mary on one arm and the lunch basket on the other.

CHAPTER XIII

Pash-e-pa-ho Relates a Story of His Heroic Youth

Pash-e-pa-ho, the octogenarian chief of the Sacs, had become a welcome visitor at the Fort. Notwithstanding his blood-curdling soubriquet, "The Stabber," he had grown amiable — even garrulous — in his declining years. Once strong of arm and limb, his members had shrunk with age and disuse. His figure, once tall, was bent. The skin hung flabbily from his face and neck once round and full. His step, once an aggressive stride, had become tottering and uncertain.

On a delightful Saturday afternoon late in May, a summer party given by Captain Allen, "in honor of Miss Sinclair and Miss Susan," sat in the shade of the commandant's cabin, the officers, with their pipes, in one group of which the captain was the central figure; the ladies, four in number — for the wives of Lieutenant Grier and Surgeon Griffin had recently joined their husbands — were chatting over their inevitable needle-work. Looking riverward, Pash-e-pa-ho was observed laboriously climbing out of his canoe, assisted by his grandson and interpreter, young On-a-wah.

Making the best of a situation not exactly to his liking, the good-natured commandant asked the

ladies if they would like to hear the old chief tell the blood-curdling tale of his last big battle with the Sioux.

Mary eagerly responded: "Now that I'm off duty, and the children are all presumably safe in their mother's arms, I'd like something decidedly blood-curdling! The story, by all means."

The other ladies were also eager to hear the tale; and accordingly Lieutenant Grier was delegated to invite the old chief to join the party.

Leaning heavily upon the arm of his stalwart grandson, "the Stabber" of other days trudged slowly toward the cabin. Captain Allen formally presented the ladies. Pash-e-pa-ho bowed slightly and dignifiedly extended his hand. On-a-wah bowed low and, embarrassed by the presence of two attractive young ladies, turned to his grandsire and engaged him in conversation in his native tongue.

Refusing a camp-chair, the aged chief seated himself upon the ground, his legs crossed, his audience grouped about him. Deliberately lighting his pipe, he awaited a formal invitation to proceed.

"Pash-e-pa-ho," said the captain, "the ladies have heard much of you and they very much want to hear the story of your last big battle with the Sioux."

Scarcely deigning to look up, the Indian took several whiffs from his pipe, shook his head gravely and replied:

"That no talk for squaws. Me know talk they like more."

Indicating by a nod that since they insisted, he would tell the story, his interpreter seated himself upon the ground by his side, and Pash-e-pa-ho began, his childish treble in marked contrast with the low and rhythmic monotone of the young interpreter. He would repeat a sentence, then take a whiff at his pipe and wait until On-a-wah had translated it. He evidently understood every word of the crude translation, for from time to time he would compel his interpreter to repeat a sentence, correcting some trifling error.

The story in English, as it was afterward recalled, ran somewhat like this:

"It was our Indian summer. The sun was low and red. It happened right here — no, there, where the Ah-ne-mah [the Des Moines] and the O-le-ka [the Raccoon] flow together. Night drove the sun-dogs away, down below the last rim of brush where sky meets earth. Camp-fires blazed. Air filled with ghosts flitting from shadow to shadow, hiding from glare of wind-swept flames. A thousand braves in council. A hundred canoes on bank here [pointing to the east]. A hundred more canoe on bank there [pointing to the south]. Many camp-fires — one bigger than the rest.

"Round big-blaze see chiefs of Sacs and Foxes — now, first time, one tribe.

"Silent, their heads cowled in blankets, the chiefs listen to young chief Pash-e-pa-ho — *me*."

Having once identified himself with the young

chieftain of perhaps sixty years before, the narrator's future references to himself were entirely impersonal. At this point Pash-e-pa-ho rose and, dignifiedly throwing his head back, peered into vacancy as though his feeble vision rested upon the scene he would describe.

"Young chief tell story of old wrongs borne by chiefs and by their fathers before them. He say O-jib-way [the tribe] just like killing wind from Northwest in midwinter. Like — but *not* like. You no stop winter wind: you *can* stop O-jib-way — yes, you can *kill* O-jib-way!

"Big fire die down. When young chief say *kill* three time, he stamp foot on log. Fire blaze up: then burn down, — all dark.

"Young chief in low voice say 'I have spoken' and sit down. He wrap blood-red blanket about his head; close eyes; wait for —he don't know what.

"He no wait long. Chiefs rise; stand round Pash-e-pa-ho. With new-sharp tomahawk up high in air, all swear death to O-jib-way. All yell war-whoop.

"Braves about other fires hear yells. Young bucks bring wood; light fire. Young chief start war dance round fire. All dance round fire.

"Soon all make for war. No more talk. All for fight. In dark, thousand braves take war-path. When sun come up, all many miles up the O-le-ka.

"Braves meet O-jib-way. All tomahawked, but one — he steal away. He — damn him — he go ahead; tell all.

"We come upon O-jib-way camp in black night — no moon — no star. Find camp asleep? No — every O-jib-way wait ready to fight!

"Long bad fight — hand to hand — tomahawks, knives — no guns. Sac drive O-jib-way toward O-le-ka. Kill all? No: some go down in river!"

This grewsome attempt at wit drew from the old chief a chuckle, indicating his keen enjoyment of the Indian's favorite form of pleasantry — the wit of understatement.

"We come back. Squaws and papooses hug us — like when you [pointing to the married officers and grinning] like when you come home from fight. They wail over our dead. They laugh over us. Say nothing too good for us — you know how it is" (again grinning at the men).

Stopping abruptly, the self-satisfied old chief turned to the ladies, smiling, and said:

"Good story — no? End well?"

Then turning to the two sisters, he added, greatly to their embarrassment:

"When you marry soldiers, you think nothing too good for them! I know."

Mary's tell-tale blushes and Susan's demure smile were keenly enjoyed by Captain Allen, whose fondness for banter was his only discoverable weakness, as Mary had more than once remarked in his presence.

The sisters speedily rallied and, rising, grasped the hand of their entertainer and thanked him for

his story, Mary adding: "And especially for its happy ending!" Nor did they omit to thank On-a-wah for his conscientious interpretation of the tale.

Bidding their host and the other guests good-bye, they were about to depart, when their host, still bent on getting even with Mary for home-thrusts which in the past he had received, commanded Lieutenant Woodruff to escort the young ladies to their quarters, especially commissioning him to look after the elderly Miss Sinclair, for he hadn't the confidence in her discretion that he had in Miss Susan's.

CHAPTER XIV

A "Hop" at the Trading Post and What Came of It

In 1844-45 the trading post in the valley on the east side of the Des Moines was the social center for the little community growing up around the post. The young farmers with their wives and sweethearts were wont to ride miles on horseback to attend the semi-monthly "hops" held in the ample store-room. Boatmen, traders, clerks, mechanics and, not least in the estimation of both town and country girls, soldiers from the Fort, — all literally danced attendance on the few "town girls," and made the farmers and farmer lads jealous by attentions paid their wives and sweethearts.

A fiddle and a bass-viol supplied the music for these occasions, the men behind the instruments sawing the air vigorously while a dragoon from the Fort "called off."

That was preëminently the day of the "square dance." The quadrille, or cotillion, the lanciers, monnae musk, French four and Virginia reel made up the principal "numbers" on the then unprinted programs, with an occasional schottische, Mizourka and waltz for the more ambitious.

The Fort was usually well represented by dra-

goons and infantrymen in uniform, and occasionally an officer would attend, dancing a few "sets" as a concession to the democratic spirit of the time. One of the traditions of the country-side was that the commandant at the Fort had once looked in on the dancing and, challenged by a pretty young girl from "Saylor's" to dance the schottische with her, had fairly taken her breath away by accepting. It is said that though, like his horse, his step was a trifle too high, he bore the ordeal with credit to his early training.

One Saturday in January, 1845, the Sinclair girls accepted an invitation from Lieutenant Woodruff and Charlie Millard to attend the hop that evening.

The two young men, though unlike in all respects, except in youth and good-fellowship, had become fast friends. Both were now well on in the twenties — the boatman a few years older than the soldier, though he "looked and acted much younger." Their temperamental differences were a frequent subject of conversation between the sisters. The lieutenant was constitutionally formal, and his training as a soldier had accentuated his habit of mind. Yet no young man in fort, or town, or in the country round was as much to him as the boyish, light-hearted, audacious, unconventional Charlie Millard. In fact, the jolly boatman, while strongly influenced by his soldier-friend — who was by far the stronger of the two — was unconsciously moulding this product of New England and New York culture into a westerner

in spirit, and emancipating him from the tyranny of society conventions.

Soon after eight, the quartet started across the river on the ice, and a half-hour later they were ushered into their respective corners at the right and left of the main entrance to the wareroom. Two red-hot barrel-stoves were surrounded by eager waiters for the call to the floor. The musicians were "tuning up." The fiddler, whose ear for music was far from trustworthy, but whose "time" was perfect, seeing Charlie warming his back by the stove in the men's corner, went over to him and inquired:

"Charlie, how does that sound to you? Is that about right?"—his fiddle emitting a succession of extra squeaks.

"O, here!" exclaimed Millard, "let me have your fiddle."

After several saws of the bow and twists of the pegs the boatman brought harmony out of discord, and, handing the instrument back, smilingly remarking:

"Jemmie, me boy, your time's all right to dance by; but you ain't got any too much tune in your system."

Everybody round the stove laughed at the fiddler's expense. Endeavoring to show that he was not ruffled, he smilingly retorted:

"Wall, what am I here for? To play sonatys; or to make time for you young bucks to dance by?"

Charlie laughed good-naturedly, saying, "You're right, Jemmie."

"Form on for the first cotillion," shouted the caller. There was a skurrying of the men for the women's corner, each in search of his "best girl."

"Two more couple this way!"

"One more couple this way!"

"All right now. 'Start the ball agoin'."

The musicians began sawing. The caller began calling off:

"Salute your pardners." "First four right and left." "Sashay." "Ladies forward." "Gents forward." "Do-si-do." "First four forward." "Allamand left." "Sides four forward" and so on to the end, closing with "Grand right and left!"— each call loud enough to be heard above the fiddling a half-mile away.

Then followed a few minutes of sociability; a buzzing of many voices, the heavy bass and high soprano uniting in contagious laughter.

Charlie, self-appointed floor-manager, rushed across the floor to the caller and suggested a "Virginy Reel," adding "Anything to warm 'em up!"

Charlie and Mary led off. There was mischief in Millard's eye and suppressed laughter and curious expectation on Mary's face. Charlie was bent on breaking up the stiffness of their first dance, if he had to sacrifice himself to the general welfare! Mary had not long to wait. Attempting to circle round the girl who advanced from the diagonally opposite cor-

ner, Charlie backed up against her with a turn which whirled her off her feet and into Charlie's capacious arms. The girl, speedily recovering her equilibrium, blushed and, to hide her embarrassment, attempted to box his ears. Charlie, good-naturedly, chased her to her corner. The laugh went round, in which Millard joined heartily.

The music, temporarily suspended, was resumed and the dance went on now with a jollity which was communicated even to the fiddlers and the solemn-visaged caller.

Dance followed dance in quick succession, straining the powers of endurance of even the robust girls from the farms.

This was Millard's night out. The boatman was in high spirits, and he just loved to dance! The lieutenant was the best-trained dancer on the floor; but the vivacious Mary thought him "a trifle too stiff and military." She preferred to "sit through" a dance with him, evidently enjoying his conversation more than his dancing. The soldier was not what the politicians call "a good mixer;" while the boatman in a single evening came to know all the girls as well as though he had known them for years; and he audaciously called them all by their "front names," — even shortening these for his convenience. "Nobody could get mad at Charlie Millard." Susan danced well, but was not carried away with the excitement of the occasion. She enjoyed Millard's vagaries, but regarded his dancing as "excessive."

Most of all she enjoyed the measured movement of the lieutenant and his respectful bearing toward his partner.

In the course of the evening, an event occurred which must not be omitted from this narrative.

Not yet fully recovered from the exertion of keeping up with Millard, though several dances had intervened, Mary met Charlie's request for a schottische with the suggestion that they go outside for a breath of fresh air. Disappointed for the moment and yet pleased with the thought of having the charming Mary all to himself, Millard procured her wrap and, throwing it over her shoulders, gallantly offered her his arm. Smiling triumphantly at the lieutenant who sat near the door talking with Susan, he marched out of the room with the air of an accepted lover. The moon was at its full, flooding the valley with its soft light. The leafless limbs of the elms were nodding to the breeze. From the open windows of the warehouse came the murmur of voices and peals of laughter. The musicians were resting.

"Glorious! glorious!" exclaimed Millard, looking up at the moon and off on the snow-covered hills to the south.

"It surely is," responded Mary dispassionately, thinking for the first time of the effect of the situation upon the impressionable Charlie.

"I'm mighty glad you proposed this," added Millard, not abashed by Mary's manner.

"Proposed what?" said Mary absent-mindedly.

"Why! that we come outside, for I've got somethin' I want to say to you — an' I couldn't say it inside where everybody was watchin' us."

"I didn't know that everybody was watching us," responded Mary. "Why should they be specially interested in us?"

The irrepressible Millard was not to be diverted from his fast-growing purpose. He resumed:

"Did you notice Sue and the lieutenant settin' on the bench near the door as we come out? — both of 'em thinkin' of everything, anything but the dancin'? Do you know, I think they'd make a splendid match? Hadn't you ever thought of it? Now, I used to think Sue liked *me* pretty well —"

"She does yet," interrupted Mary with less than her usual reticence in speaking of her sister.

"But — *you* know what I mean."

"Well, no — not exactly."

"Now, Mary, I'm not the man to beat round the bush —"

"But don't you think we can trust Susan and Lieutenant Woodruff with their own heart affairs?"

"Now, see here, Mary! You're tryin' to head me off: but I ain't easily headed off — you must know that by this time. I've made up my mind I want *you*. You an' me always has the best kind of a time together. Let's keep it up! Let's git married!"

"Why, Charlie Millard! I ought to box your ears! You know I like you, — but, just because I like you and have good times with you — that's no sign I

think enough of you to settle down with you for life. I'm not the woman you ought to marry, and you can never be any more to me than you are to-night. You've compelled me to be frank, and I've given you your answer, and its *final.* Now don't make it impossible for me to be the good friend I want to be,— let's go inside. I just heard the call for one more couple."

Millard was, as he said, "all broke up," adding, "Now honest, Mary, I thought you'd at least give me some encouragement. I would a' been willin' to wait for an answer — say till navigation opens. But I know you too well to fool myself. I know girls — I ought to. I've had experience with all kinds. They don't come back at a feller the way you did just now unless they's a first choice somewhere in the background."

A flush of anger rose to Mary's tell-tale face. She indignantly exclaimed, "Charlie Millard, you've no right —"

Charlie interrupted her with an abject apology; then, throwing himself down on a bench and tossing his arms over the back of the bench, he looked the picture of despair.

Mary, standing over him, rallied him, scolded him, entreated him to rise above the disappointment of the moment, urging him to go back to the ball-room and have a good time, throwing off the delusion under which he had been laboring.

Charlie finally rose, offered Mary his arm and the

two returned to the dancing room — just in time for him to lead Susan to the floor for the last dance.

Mary, in no mood for dancing, and presuming on the lieutenant's preference for "a quiet talk any time," suggested that they waive the formality of "the last dance with your partner," and watch the rest.

Disturbed and thrown off her balance somewhat by the recent incident, Mary surprised and amused the lieutenant by a running commentary on the absurdities of social gatherings — "hops included," — remarking especially on the hilarity of our friend Charlie and the demure Susan's quiet enjoyment of his absurdities. Though not much given to jolity, her listener indulged in laughter so loud that Millard shook his great fist at the pair good-naturedly accusing them of laughing at his expense.

On the part of Millard there was every indication of a miraculously speedy recovery from the wrench his heart had received.

The return at midnight was without special incident and the parting at the gate was with the usual formalities. The two men went their way together, arm in arm.

Next morning Millard took his departure — none knew whither. His landlady reported that he had taken with him a small bundle, strapped to his back, knapsack fashion, and a soldier's haversack containing a loaf of bread, a hunk of dried beef and a drinking cup — that was all. When asked where he was

going, he said he was headed toward Dubuque, or some point near there on the upper Mississippi, and might not be back for several weeks — possibly not till the spring break-up on the river.

CHAPTER XV

Charlie Millard and Susan Sinclair

One evening, a few months after his mysterious disappearance, the riverman surprised his friend, the lieutenant, by appearing at his cabin, tawny, unshaven and unshorn, and looking more like a Moor than a native-born American.

Millard made a clean breast of it, declaring that if somebody would invent an automatic kicking machine he'd buy one and turn it on himself! He humbly admitted Mary Sinclair's superiority to himself — "and, for that matter, Susan is too," — but he thought Sue's temper was "a leetle more even" and that by working at it regularly he might in time live up somewhere near to Sue's high standard! He was willing to try, if she'd only let him; and that's what he was going to find out before he was twenty-four hours older.

"You see, Woodruff, I was carried plum off my feet that night at the hop. I see you an' Sue a-settin' there by the door, havin' the coziest kind of a time, an' my head was full of the fun Mary an' me had had, that last dance; an' somehow, when Mary asked me to go out into the moonlight with her, I was jest idjut enough to think she wanted to give me a chance to pop the question, an' so make the way clear for

you an' Sue! An' when I popped, I'm durned if she didn't come blame near boxin' my ears! An' she ought to a' done it. Wall, on the way home with the girls that night, I made up my mind I'd jest strike out for the upper Mississip' and so clear the air in an' 'round Fort Des Moines. But I hadn't gone fur 'afore I begun to feel homesick; an' the further I tramped the plainer I saw that a gal that knows herself as well as Mary Sinclair does wan't goin' to tie herself down for life with a man jest 'cause he can make 'er laugh. W'y, any clown can make a woman laugh!

"Say, Woodruff," continued Millard, changing the subject, "do you know, Mary Sinclair's dead in love with *you*? That's what's the matter with *her*. I see you don't believe it. Wish I was as sure of Sue as I be that Mary worships the ground you walk on."

Here the lieutenant impatiently brought the one-sided interview to a close, telling Charlie he was due at singing-school and was expected to call and get the Sinclair girls.

"Any word you want to send by me?" he asked, knowing Charlie would naturally want to "clean-up" before meeting the woman he hoped to win.

Millard's only message was: "Say hello to 'em for me, an' tell 'em I'm goin' to break in on 'em sometime to-morrow, not afore evenin' prob'ly."

Next morning, while on his way to Tommy, the garrison barber, and Thrift, the garrison tailor, Millard happened to meet the sisters on their way to

school. With the vanity of his sex, his first thought was of his unshorn and unshaven appearance. His second thought was his misfortune in meeting the two together, for he wanted to "make up to Sue first."

But the girls had spied him, and he couldn't run away.

"Has the dead come to life!" exclaimed Mary, cordially extending her hand.

"Charlie Millard, where *did* you come from?" inquired Susan with a look of concern on her face.

"I'm the live-est dead man you ever see," responded Charlie with a chuckle. "I jest made a little overland trip to Dubuque on business, an' I had sech a good time on the way goin', I decided I'd come back the way I went, instid o' goin' round by Burlington."

Something akin to a blush suffused his tawny face as he continued:

"I didn't mean to let anybody but Woodruff an' my landlady see me till Tommy had sheared an' scraped me and Johnnie had ironed me out; but it's all in a lifetime. — Goin' to be home this evenin', girls? I want to tell you all about the shootin' match Saylor an' me had with Injuns that first day out, an' all about the Parkers of Parker's Grove, an' all about my visit with my ol' Injun friend, Grey Wolf."

He was assured that he would be welcome that evening, "or at any other time." He looked up suspiciously, to discover if possible the significance of

the words "or at any other time." He didn't quite like the general terms in which his welcome was expressed.

He called quite early that evening, but found himself preceded by Lieutenant Woodruff, who stood talking with Mary at the gate. They were evidently going somewhere, and possibly waiting for him. Susan, seated on the porch, rose to meet him. After the greetings all round, the lieutenant was first to open the subject uppermost in all minds.

"Charlie Millard, I was so glad to see you yesterday, — and in such a rush too — that I didn't tell you what I thought of you. I'm going to say to your face what I've been saying behind your back. The only plea you can make for going off the way you did is the poor plea of insanity. What have you got to say for yourself?"

Far from taking offence at his friend's raillery, Millard laughed and frankly admitted "it did look kind o' crazy; but there comes times when the best of us has our crazy streaks."

Turning to Susan, he added: "I'm harmless now though. You can wind me round your finger without half tryin'!"

Mary reminded the lieutenant that choir-practice was to begin at early candle-light, and they were already late. Assured that Charlie would excuse them, the two left the returned wanderer alone with the woman he had come back to claim.

"Well, Charlie," remarked Susan by way of open-

ing the conversation, "Tommy and Johnnie have certainly improved your appearance. You put my friendship to a pretty severe test this morning."

Charlie failed to find any reassurance in the playful remark; but, reasoning that girls have a way of "talking off," he made the most of the opening with — "I did look pretty tough, that's a fact; but my heart was all right. — Sue, what do you say to takin' a walk down by the river? I'll feel more to home when I git where I can see the moon shinin' down on the water. I'm kind of a water-dog, you know."

Ominously silent, Susan rose and the two walked slowly eastward.

Millard broke the silence with — "I tell you, Sue, the river looked good to me in the moonlight last night, as I tramped down the hill yonder" — pointing to the height now known as Capitol Hill.

"It looks beautiful to me in any light," responded Susan absent-mindedly.

Soon the two were seated on the bluff overlooking the ferry and, in default of anything to say at the time, were intently watching the approaching ferry-boat. In the stern of the flat-bottomed boat sat a man and a woman, and the woman bore a young child in her arms. In the bow was a trunk and atop of it was a big bundle, evidently bedding. As they looked, they saw the man fondle and kiss the baby's hand, and then lean far over and kiss its upturned lips. The low moon shone in the faces of the passengers in the boat, and it was observed that the counten-

ance of the mother lighted with a pleased smile as she saw the homage paid her child — their child.

Emboldened by the sympathetic smile on Susan's face, Millard broke the silence saying:

"Sue Sinclair, if I was in that man's place, with the woman I love in the same boat with me, an' we was headed towards a home of our own, I'd be the happiest man on top o' the earth."

Now Susan Sinclair was not the woman to lead a man on to a proposal. With a woman's intuition she had read her lover's mind, and had staid away from choir-practice that night to have it out with him, and so spare him future embarrassment and, possibly, future pain. This unanticipated picture of married life and family devotion, and Millard's remark, with its evident purpose, had deeply moved her. She looked up admiringly into the handsome face, and thought: "With all his failings, what a dear fellow he is!" But, with the thought came another: "Suppose Charlie and I *were* in that boat, and I with his baby in my arms, and we were home-seekers — what then? What assurance have I that Charlie could ever settle down to a prosaic home life with only one woman to love and be loved by? And suppose I *could* be assured of his unwavering love, could Charlie satisfy the strong cravings of my nature for soul companionship! Is Charlie the kind of a man I want to father my children?" — These soul-searching questions closed her lips.

While the two sat upon the bank, silently watch-

ing the moving scene on the river, Charlie's eager face in sharp profile, Susan's troubled look kindly shadowed by the low-descending moon, the hand of Destiny was busy settling the fate of each, sweeping away, one after another, the sorry complications which confuse young hearts, enabling one of them to emancipate herself from mere environment, — to captain her own soul and lead it to victory.

The ferryman landed the little family with their belongings, and after giving the man a few general directions, started back in response to a signal from the other side.

The stranger stood facing his new world with a baffled expression on his countenance. The woman, trustingly leaving the problem of the immediate future with the man, seated herself upon her bundle and began to sway back and forth, reassuring the drowsy baby-boy that all was well.

The ferryman, not quite satisfied that he had done his full duty by the strangers, pointing to Millard, shouted:

"Ask that man yonder. Mebbe he can tell you more about it."

With that the newcomer started toward Millard. The kisses he had given the child, and the loving smile on the wife's face had prepared the kind-hearted riverman for what followed.

"Good evening," said the stranger.

"*Fine* evenin', responded Millard.

"The ferryman tells me there's no hotel in Fort Moines; I s'posed there was one."

"No: they're talkin' of buildin' one; but talk's cheap. S'pose you're wonderin' where you can put up to-night?"

"Do you know a Mr. Saylor — John Saylor?"

"Know 'im well: I staid all night with 'im night afore last, an' helped 'im in the field only yesterday."

"Lucky I met you. How far is it to his house?"

" 'Bout six miles — mebbe seven."

"Seven miles, O my God! man, what can I do? I don't mind myself; I can walk it easy: but I can't leave the wife and baby and the things! If your wife 'll only take her in for the night, I'll come in for her in the morning and I'll pay you well for your trouble. I'm John's cousin. Jamison's my name, and John sent for me to help him round up cattle for the Fort."

Much to Susan's relief, the moon sailing low in the heavens rode behind a fleecy-white cloud just as the man uttered the embarrassing words "*your wife.*"

For a moment she was speechless. Then, summoning all her reserves of womanhood, in a low voice she said:

"You are mistaken: Mr. Millard is not my husband. I'll go and speak to your wife, and we — my sister and I — will arrange some way to take care of her and the baby until morning. Perhaps Mr. Millard, will start you on your way to the Saylors."

"I'll go one better'n that," responded Millard. I ain't got a blessed thing to do to-morrow but sleep. So, if you don't mind the tramp, stranger, I'll pilot you to Saylors to-night, an' to-morrow mornin' we'll come back in John's lumber-wagon for the wife an' baby an' the things. I've got a key to the padlock on the warehouse door over yonder, an' while Miss Sinclair's arrangin' for the woman an' her baby, me and you'll just tote the trunk an' bundle over to the warehouse. Is that all right, stranger?"

"Right? I should say! But, say Mr. Millard, that was a bad break I made calling the little woman your wife, wasn't it?"

"O, that's all right, Jamison," responded Millard. "I don't mind tellin' you, for I don't care who knows it: if I could call that little woman my wife, I'd be the happiest man on top o' the earth — possibly barrin' yourself that's got a wife that smiles down on you when she sees you kiss 'er baby!"

The men shook hands, each giving the other a grasp that meant kinship.

Meantime Susan had formed and unfolded a plan for the wife and child.

Two hours later Mrs. Jamison and her baby-boy were sleeping soundly in the double-bed in the front room at Mrs. Cameron's, and the sisters were "comfortably fixed" for the night on the floor in the dining room.

Meantime Millard and Jamison were making rapid

strides through the bottom lands of Beaver Creek on their way to the Saylor farm.

— And the word the lover had thought to say remained unspoken. Nor was there need of the spoken word.

CHAPTER XVI

A Resourceful Horse-Thief's Round-Up

The year 1845 was marked by many events disturbing the peace of the Indians on the reservation and the quiet of the infantrymen and dragoons on duty at the Fort.

The anticipated opening of the new reservation to settlers led to many incursions, both by would-be settlers and by land-sharks, all eager to spy out the land in advance of the formal opening. Then, too, the reservation was infested by horse-thieves who were wont to visit the Indian camps ostensibly as secret dispensers of whisky. These confidence men of the border would first ply their easy victims with vile liquor, then win their confidence, and finally ride off with a brace of Indian ponies, leaving in exchange therefor a few jugs and bottles of literal "fire-water."

The most audacious and successful of this class was one Jonas Carsner, who figures prominently in the early chronicles of the Des Moines valley. When, finally, Carsner was driven over the border into Missouri, he left a trail of felonies behind him extending all the way from Boonsboro on the north to Agency City on the south.

Early in the spring, Captain Allen sent out a small

detachment of dragoons under Sergeant Hill, with orders to bring the offender to the Fort, alive or dead.

Carsner was caught napping in a grove a few miles east of Sinclair's Point — his favorite rendezvous. He was brought handcuffed to the Fort and tried by court-martial. Unfortunately for the cause of justice, no witnesses to his guilt were to be found at the time, and he was acquitted. But so confident was Captain Allen of Carsner's guilt that he ordered the sergeant to turn the thief over to the Indians south of the Fort, with the direction that they escort him to the eastern border of the reservation and let him go scot free, threatening him with dire vengeance should he ever re-appear on the reservation. "Unofficially," he intimated that should the Indians incline to give the thief the horse-whipping he deserved, no questions would be asked provided they didn't kill or permanently injure the victim.

The Indians entered into the grim humor of the suggestion with keen enjoyment. Taking Carsner into the woods, they stripped him and gave him a severe flogging, extorting from him threats of vengeance, yells of pain and tears of self-pity. He was then taken to the nearest creek and "ducked." Resuming his clothes, he was mounted upon a pony and ridden outside the reservation line.

In a few weeks it was currently reported that Carsner was again plying his trade on the reservation. An Indian pony had been stolen. The animal was re-

covered and the thief was flogged. Abjectly promising to do better, Carsner was again escorted to the border and released, there being only slender circumstantial evidence of his guilt.

The very next night Carsner "went one better," stealing two horses — this time from a trader on his way to the Fort with a wagon-load of supplies.

The Indian who had recovered his pony, happening along, loaned the animal to the trader that he might overtake the thief and recover his horses.

While the trader was following the outlaw's trail through the timber the thief suddenly appeared at the roadside, gun in hand. The trader's horses were tied to a near-by tree. Covering his pursuer with his gun, Carsner compelled the trader to dismount and turn the Indian pony over to him, and was then directed to "make tracks for home." The thief then coolly mounted the pony, and, leading the trader's horses, rode off triumphantly, decidedly the gainer by the eagerness of the trader to recover his property!

But there is a sequel to the tale of Jones Carsner's cleverness which bears such direct and intimate relation to the story in progress in these pages as to call for a separate chapter.

CHAPTER XVII

Mary Sinclair and the Horse-Thief

Soon after the occupation of the garrison Captain Allen became impressed with the necessity of establishing reliable wagon-road connections with the outside world. River navigation was uncertain and the roadway cut through the forest and over the ridge, connecting the Mississippi with the upper Des Moines, was rendered impassable by every heavy rain.

The most serious obstacle to travel was Four Mile Creek, so-called because the creek was four miles distant from the Fort, or, as was facetiously said of it, "four miles from anywhere." One of the commandant's earliest enterprises was the bridging of "Four Mile" and the macadamizing of the spongy drift which marked the creek's approaches from the west.

The bridge, built by Peter Newcomer in consideration for a deed of a quarter-section of reservation land, had done good service for two years, but the last spring freshet had lifted it from its foundations and borne it down-stream and into the Des Moines. Something must be done — and that quickly, for many wagon-loads of military stores must be hauled that season, in preparation for the removal of

the Indians to the new reservation beyond the Missouri.

The commandant presented the matter to his council of administration and found that all were of one mind in that Lieutenant Woodruff was the man to undertake the task.

"If Captain Allen says the word," responded the young lieutenant, "and will back it up with a detail of men of my choosing, also ox-teams, timber, nails and the necessary tools, I'll build a bridge that 'll stay long after we're gone."

The captain assured him that the garrison's resources would be placed at his disposal — and so the matter was settled.

New drawings were made, and a few days later before sun-up, several ox-teams loaded with timber, tools and nails were on their way to the creek preceded by Woodruff and twelve picked men.

On their way the lieutenant met a squad of dragoons returning from the unsuccessful night-ride in search of the notorious horse-thief. Sergeant Hill reported that after following the course of the creek for miles, the party was forced to conclude that Carsner must have crossed the stream before the bridge went out and was already well on his way to the border.

It has been said that there is a latent detective in every man. Be that as it may, Lieutenant Woodruff had hardly parted with the returning dragoons before he decided to make an effort to capture the

thief — well assured that the captain would approve of his course.

Leaving the preliminary task of unloading with a trusty sergeant and six stalwart privates, the lieutenant and five young men eager for adventure rode up the creek to the ford. Then, making their way down-stream on the east side, they soon struck the main road and thence rode rapidly toward the cabin of one Cephas Brown, a settler in the Spring Creek valley, a long hour's ride east of Four Mile. From Cephas the lieutenant hoped to learn something of Carsner.

Galloping on ahead of his men, Woodruff reached a slight elevation overlooking the Spring Creek valley and there, to his surprise, he saw tied to a tree in the Brown door-yard, two horses and an Indian pony — presumably the very animals Carsner had stolen! One of the horses had evidently met with some mishap, for his left fore-leg was bandaged, and he was standing on three legs.

"Boys, we've treed the coon!" exclaimed the excited leader, pointing to the unexpected sight.

The boys were eager to descend at once upon the enemy and take him by storm: but the lieutenant led them by a circuitous route by which they were shielded from observation by a thick grove of scrub-oak.

The lieutenant and two men took their station at the front-door, and the remaining three appeared simultaneously at the back-door, thus heading off their prisoner's escape.

Without knocking, Woodruff, revolver in hand, opened the front door and entered, followed closely by his men. A moment later, the men in the rear, each with a drawn revolver, invaded the kitchen.

At the kitchen table sat a short stout man with a sallow complexion, his long black hair and heavy black beard partially concealing a villainous countenance. His right arm rested in a sling made of a red bandanna handkerchief. With his left hand he was in the act of conveying to his mouth the leg of a chicken, when he was startled by hearing the front-door open. As he turned, the kitchen door also opened. With the chicken-leg suspended between plate and mouth, the villain stared first at one group of armed men and then at the other. A look of chagrin and terror overspread his face. He sank back in his chair and whined:

"Well, what do you want? What have *I* done? Do you take me for a horse-thief 'cause I've got a few horses on my hands? I ain't no horse-thief. I'm horse-buyer for your garrison, lieutenant. If you won't believe me, go ask your captain, — I'll go with you. You'll find I'm jest what I say I be."

All this time he was peering anxiously into his captor's face, eager to know what his fate was, and yet afraid to learn.

The lieutenant coolly responded: "Captain Allen has sent for you. He has commissioned me to escort you to the Fort. We'll start as soon as you finish your meal."

With that he satirically directed the soldiers to "entertain Mr. Carsner" while he visited with the Browns in the front room.

The fleeting impression Woodruff had received on entering the cabin was sadly confirmed. Farmer Brown and his wife were in bed, almost helplessly ill with malarial fever. Their three young children, still more helpless from the same ailment, lay near them — the baby in a cradle within reach of the mother, and the boy and girl on a rude trundle-bed. Their thin, sallow faces told the sad story of the helplessness of the isolated pioneer family when sickness overtakes them.

In response to the soldier's sympathetic inquiries, the sick man, propping himself up on his pillow, proceeded to tell his tale of woe. His wife, feebly rocking the cradle in vain endeavor to quiet the wail of the child, frequently interrupted, filling in details regarded by her as essential.

In brief, one after another had come down with fever; and, since the bridge had gone out, almost nobody had passed the house, and with a single exception — a neighbor on his way to Eddyville, nobody had stopped to inquire. The nearest doctor was at Camp Creek, some twelve miles distant. But, omitting the wife's interruptions, we will let Cephas tell his own story:

"There's where we was at, four days ago this mornin'. When ma give up an' come to bed, we knowd it was all up with us — onless somethin'

turned up. We wondered who of us would go first, an' who'd do the buryin'. I couldn't more'n raise my hand, an' ma wa'n't much better off.

"Ma kep' sayin' 'th' Lord 'll pervide,' an' I kep' sayin' 'why don't He do it now, 'fore it's too late?' 'You wait, Cephas,' she'd say; an' I'd say, 'Ain't I waitin'? I'm tired o' waitin!'

"I'd hardly got the words out o' my mouth four days ago this mornin', when we heard a knock at the door. 'Come in,' says I. An' who should appear at the door but 'Squire Sinclair's oldest gal, Mary. You know the Sinclairs?"

The lieutenant could scarcely restrain his eagerness, as he responded, "Yes, I know them well. Then what? Go on — go on! I haven't much time. I must be off with Carsner."

"Then what? Why everything happened! Somehow the news reached the Point that the Browns was all down sick with the fever. Both the gals happened to be home visitin' — they both teach school at the Fort, you know. Sue Sinclair couldn't come, 'cause she was nursin' her own folks; so Mate — we call 'er Mate; but her name's Mary — so Mate loaded their old mare with bundles o' things she'd need an' things we'd most likely need, an' started out fore sun-up to camp down with us, bent on seein' us through.

"Wall, she didn't waste no time. It done ma good — an' it would a' done your heart good, lieutenant, to see the way Mate hustled things into their places.

After straightenin' up the house, callin' in the horse an' cow an' chickens, an' milkin' the cow that hadn't been milked sence the day before — the last work ma done 'fore she took to her bed; and then, after makin' tea an' bilin' eggs an' toastin' some dry bread left over from ma's last bakin', — what did that gal do but pick up the clo'es an' do a big washin'! An' 'fore noon she had 'em all out on the line! An' 'fore night she had most of 'em ironed! I never seen anything like it, — the work that gal done that first day!

"Wall, the next day" —

Here the lieutenant's impatience gave way and with ill-concealed eagerness, he inquired:

"Where's Miss Sinclair now? I want to see her."

"She went 'cross lots to neighbor Murrow's on Mud Creek, to git his son Dave to ride over to Camp Creek for the doctor. She'll be back any minnit now, she took sech an early start."

Woodruff went to the door and looked anxiously toward the rising sun and, returning, took his seat near the bed. The sick man resumed his tale.

"Afore Mate come, I would 'ave been glad to see even Jone Carsner, for I've found they's some good even in a horse-thief. But the next day, when Jone come in on us, I was afeared he'd scare the gal off. But, no: she looked 'im over an' seen he wan't lyin' 'bout his arm bein' broke an' his foot smashed, an' then she took 'im in an' give 'im some breakfast. An' while he was a shovelin' in the bacon an' eggs, she let on to me that he wa'n't in no condition to

move on, an' one of his horses — his best one — had to walk on three legs an' one of *them* was sore, an' he'd decided to put up with us for three days. He was willin' to pay in advance for his an' his horses' keep, an' he handed her a ten-dollar gold-piece which she turned over to me, refusin' to have anything to do with the man's money.

"To make a long story short, I made the best of somethin' I couldn't help an' told Mate if she'd feed the brute, an' if he'd promise to be decent an' sleep on the hay in the barn, an' not come into the house 'cept at meal-time, an' agree to go when his three days was up, I'd let 'im stay.

"So he stayed; an' I'll say this fer the cuss — after findin' he couldn't boss or fool with Mate Sinclair, an' after she tied his lame arm up in his bandanna, an' cut 'is meat for 'im, an' give 'im some hot water an' soap, an' bandaged his horse's leg fer 'im, all the good they was in Jone come out! He couldn't do nuff fer 'er. He felt hurt when she wouldn't keep his money: but I guess he respected her all the more fer it. An' she made 'im keep his place — in the barn with 'is hosses. An' he soon found he wasn't to speak to her till he was spoke to. An' as for us, he tried to think up ways of helpin' us! An' when Mate was dead-set on gittin' a doctor, ma an' me wan't the least afeared of bein' left alone with Jone. Of course, 'twant as though we'd had a chist o' gold in the house, or a barnfull of thorough-

bred hosses, for 'im to draft into gov'ment service, as he calls it.

"Wall, the third day come, an' he seemed as anxious to go as we was to have 'im. His arm, that Mate had bandaged fer 'im every night an' mornin' didn't pain 'im much, an' his horse could use his foreleg with a limp; an' he said there was somebody waitin' hard for him at Eddyville. — He was lyin', you understand, when he told you he was headed toward the Fort. So he got out the hosses an' — well, lieutenant, if you'd a' come an hour later, you'd a' missed 'im."

At this point there was a general pushing back of chairs in the kitchen, and Carsner stood in the doorway with a dragoon on each side of him, each with a hand on his shoulder. Turning to his captor, between a snarl and a whine, he said:

"Lieutenant, I find I'm in no condition to travel. My arm's broke at the wrist and my best horse limps so I don't dare ride 'im or even lead 'im so far. I need one day more of rest, an' so does my horse. You tell Captain Allen I pledge my word I'll start to-morrow mornin' bright and early, and I'll be there 'fore night.

"I didn't tell you how it happened — the accident. You see I was on my way to the Fort and part way over Newcomer's bridge when she went out. In the tumble I broke my wrist, and the horse I was ridin' sprained his leg. I held on to the bridle with my well hand and was pulled out. But we come out on the

wrong side of the crick for gittin' back to the Fort. I was so bunged up an' my horse was so lame — limpin' on three legs — that it was all I could do to git as far as this. You tell Cap Allen I'm as anxious to turn the horses in an' git my money as he is to git 'em."

"You told us you was headed for Eddyville," said a weak, shrill voice from the farthest side of the room.

"Shut up, ma; this ain't your put-in," said a gruff voice from the same quarter.

The lieutenant turned to Mrs. Brown and, with a satirical smile on his face, said:

"Mrs. Brown forgets that a wise man sometimes changes his mind."

Leaving Carsner in the custody of the sergeant, Lieutenant Woodruff stepped outside and around to the well-sweep to get a drink of water. As he was raising the tin dipper to his lips he heard steps approaching from the field.

Looking up he saw Mary Sinclair coming rapidly toward him. A rail fence intervening, she placed her hands upon the top rail and, seemingly without effort, leaped over. But her dress caught on a splinter and the lieutenant hastened to loosen it. This done, their eyes met and, with a face flushed with exercise and beaming with joy, she clasped both his hands and exclaimed:

"I will never doubt again!"

Making haste to explain, she said she hadn't prayed specially for his coming. She had simply prayed for relief. But, smilingly and with another burst of color on her cheeks, she frankly admitted she was none the less glad her prayer had been answered in this particular way.

Then, with a touch of feminine vanity which pleased the young man more than she could have guessed, she turned down her rolled-up sleeves and, pointing to her somewhat soiled and wrinkled calico dress, naively remarked that she never dreamt he'd catch her "looking so like a fright."

Shyly noting the luxuriant beauty of the golden-brown hair trailing far down her back, the red-rose beauty of her cheeks and the sky blue of her eyes filled with tears, the lieutenant, wholly unused to the language of compliment, dared not give expression to the words which trembled on his lips. Instead, he plied Mary with prosaic questions, which she made haste to answer in the most matter-of-fact way. Her story, in brief was:

Returning home for their late spring vacation, the sisters had found the whole family and most of the neighbors' families more or less ill with malarial fever, following the heavy spring rains. In the midst of their activities at home, came word of the Browns' need of help, — a veritable Macedonian cry for help. Nobody in the neighborhood could be spared — for many were seriously ill. Mary felt that Susan,

a born nurse and care-taker, could not be spared from her own home. Nothing remained but for her, Mary, to respond to the call. So, mounting the old family horse, she had come on her errand of mercy. Turning old Fanny loose, well knowing that the mare would return to her stable unattended, she had established herself at the Browns, as nurse, cook, and general utility woman, much to the relief of the family, who must have died had relief been much longer deferred. In the absence of a physician, she had faithfully administered the quinine she had found in the sick-room, and with good food and careful nursing she hoped they might all "pull through."

She then retold the story of the horse-thief's advent, not omitting a number of disagreeable experiences which made the man's presence unbearable — experiences of which the Browns were kept in ignorance. Feeling Carsner could at least be trusted with the Browns, and acting on the assumption that he would leave that day, she had taken the long tramp across the prairie in the hope that she could induce Mr. Murrow to persuade the one physician in the Camp Creek region to make at least one call on the Browns. She had learned from her friend that the physician referred to was riding night and day and couldn't neglect his patients for even the most urgent case outside his regular ride.

The lieutenant then briefly told his tale, relieving Mary by the assurance that Carsner would never trouble her again.

"Thank God for that!" exclaimed the young woman with a suggestion of tragedy in her tone and manner. Then she added, half apologetically:

"I'm sure you'll acquit me of desire to pose as a heroine: but just to let you know the measure of relief you've brought me, I'll simply say that had he staid on the premises another night, either he or I would not have survived the night."

With these words, so foreign to the lips of Mary Sinclair, she shuddered and caught his arm for support.

A moment later, regaining her self-possession, Mary went with the lieutenant into the house, and after cordially grasping the hand of each dragoon, she pushed past the despised Carsner, and proceeded, against their protest, to prepare a lunch for each — "to eat while riding back to the Fort."

In hurried words the lieutenant informed Mary of his bridge-building project in the neighborhood of the Browns — "only some eight miles away" — and of his purpose to ride over very soon — soon as he could find an evening he could call his own — possibly on the following evening — to learn how she was getting on. He assured her he would send her a doctor who had located in the little village near the Fort. He was anxious about her and her patients, and hoped to find other ways to make her burden easier. He would also inform Captain Allen, and through him the patrons of her school, that the opening of

the spring term must necessarily be delayed a few days.

When the men rode off, with their prisoner mounted on the Indian pony, and the other stolen animals trailing behind, the lieutenant lingered at the point at which, that morning, he had discovered Carsner's retreat, and gallantly waved his hand to the white-aproned young woman who, with hand shading her eyes from the afternoon sun, stood watching the strange procession until it passed out of sight.

CHAPTER XVIII

Lieutenant Woodruff and Mary Sinclair

Late that night Lieutenant Woodruff turned his prisoner over to Captain Allen and the stolen horses to the quartermaster. Early next morning he rode to Four Mile Creek to begin work on the bridge.

With few tools and wholly without the aid of modern bridge-building machinery, the task undertaken involved weeks of the hardest kind of labor. But every hard task has its compensations. In addition to the satisfaction which the normal man takes in constructive work, a satisfaction more keenly felt by the young lieutenant than by most men, there was joy in the thought that just over the hill yonder — scarcely more than an hour's ride — was the woman he loved. There was no longer any secret between the outward man and his inmost soul, no longer any attempt to keep from himself the fact that he loved Mary Sinclair. And along with that full understanding came a delightful husbandly sense of responsibility for the safety and well-being of the woman he loved.

Every evening, mounted on Old Grey, he would fiercely gallop down the road and over the hill to the cabin of Cephas Brown. And every evening, as

he rode to the highest point of the ridge, he was sure to see the woman of his dreams standing just outside the door waiting his appearing.

One rare moonlit night the two were seated under an oak tree near the cabin. Mary's patients, all except Cephas, well on the way to recovery, were soundly sleeping after weeks of intermittent wakefulness.

The two were living over again the incidents connected with the famous banquet at "the Point" two years before; and the story recalled the discussion at the table on the general subject of war. Mary asked the lieutenant if recent events had changed his views, so well expressed in his banquet speech.

The reassuring response was that two years' added experience, — chiefly in constructive work, however, — had only strengthened the views then crudely expressed by him. His present judgment was that war with Mexico was inevitable. The war-power of the government was in the hands of a new President who wanted war quite as much as his predecessor, and would precipitate the tragedy regardless of cost in blood and treasure.

"What then remains for you, next fall, after you shall have turned over the Indians to the authorities at Fort Leavenworth?" inquired Mary with suppressed eagerness.

After a moment's thought, the lieutenant answered:

"I am compelled to say I do not know. I had not

thought to say the words my heart urges me to say until I could give definite answer to the question I knew was in your mind. I need not tell you I love you, Mary. You surely must have guessed my secret months ago. But you can scarcely realize the intensity of my love. Much as I love life — much as I want to live and go on doing things — I'd gladly lay down my life for you. This is not mere sentiment, Mary; it's fact. After guessing my secret, you must have wondered what strange spell held back the word for which your own heart waited, — for I need not ask you to reveal *your* secret. I have long known it, and it has made me both glad and sad. Mary, darling, I will tell you what the potent spell has been.

"The purpose of the Polk administration is so hopelessly confused by diplomacy that at this distance, I can't tell whether the President and his advisers are actuated by a fine sense of national honor or by lust for conquest.

"Educated at government expense and holding a commission in government service, it would generally be regarded as dishonorable in me to quit that service in anticipation of war. And yet I feel it would be moral cowardice in me to participate in a war of conquest.

"Before asking you to share my future, I should know — reasonably well at least — what that future will be — whether, in fact, I have a future that would be worthy of you.

"I well know your aversion to war; and, when no

great principle is involved and no great cause enlists supporters, I share in your aversion.

"Cowardly as it would seem to many — especially to men trained to war — I would resign — I would submit to the brand of cowardice without flinching — though it should burn into my very soul — rather than bear arms in an unjust war."

Mary had slipped her trembling hand into his and, leaning on his arm, was looking up through tears into his earnest face. A tear rolled down her glowing cheek and fell upon his hand. Soldierly self-control had sustained him to the end of his solemn declaration; but that hot tear was more than he could bear with equinimity. Laughing nervously, he continued, but in a different key:

"Darling one, I didn't mean to do all the talking! What an awkward lover I am! — and how inconsiderate — to make you a party to my doubts, and fears! I should have held to my original purpose and waited till I could *know*!"

He waited in silence for a response. Drawing her more closely to him, he saw the answer in her upturned face.

Finally, in an undertone that thrilled him, Mary ventured to put into words the emotion which for a time had rendered speech impossible.

"My hero — my darling — let's leave the future for some to-morrow. No more of far-away Mexico to-night. This — *this* is enough for me now! This is all

I can comprehend to-night — the fact that you really love me — love me *now* as I have long hoped you would, someday! For to-night at least, let's turn our faces away from that awful war-cloud. Don't you remember the hymn we once sang together? Let me refresh your memory."

Resuming her former position, and with it her former composure, Mary sang in an undertone the words:

> Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
> The clouds ye so much dread
> Are big with mercies and shall break
> With blessings on your head!

Then, smiling over the appositeness of the words to their present state of mind, Mary nestled closer to her lover and, in the low sweet tones which love suggests, continued:

"Dear one, all the future shall be yours; but let *me* have to-night! Tell me more of your love for *me*. When did you first suspect you were in love? And when did you first *know* you loved me? What did I say — or do — to win your love? And, darling, tell me, when did you guess *my* secret? And *how* did you happen to guess it? Was it my tell-tale blushes? Or did I let drop some word that gave away the secret? Tell me all — all — *all*! I'm just tired enough, and foolish enough, and selfish enough, to-night, to want to be petted and humored. Treat me as you would some little girl you dearly love — and yet [smiling]

not exactly that way, either! That would not satisfy me now! Go over the whole story and tell me just how you happened to care for me; and let me close my eyes and listen — no, let me look up into your eyes and *see* you tell it. I'll imagine it's all about somebody else — No, that won't do at all, for I could be awfully jealous of that somebody else! It must all be about *me* to-night. My own petty self has been repressed so long! I'm tired — more tired than I had thought — and I need all — all the comfort you can give me! Darling, whatever of sorrow may come to-morrow, let it come and I'll meet it: but I have no room in my soul to-night for anything but my great joy in the thought that the one man in all the world — who, himself, *is* all the world to me — has spoken the word I had begun to fear might never be said! And to think that his long silence, which I could not understand was *because* of his great love for me!"

With that the poor over-wrought and over-worried watcher and waiter, so unexpectedly come into her own, finding herself possessed of a wealth of love of which she had not dared to dream, gave way to hysterical laughter and tears, her frame trembling with emotion which she could no longer control.

And so these twain became one — one in thought, hope and purpose. And, when later the moon went down behind the oaks, a joyous calm came to the woman's perturbed soul. Her parting words to her

lover were: "Come what will in the future, dear heart, you'll find me equal to it. I wasn't quite prepared for this great happiness to-night. Good-night, dear one, I hear the baby moaning and must go to her."

The soldier rode back to his comrades, and the nurse went back to her watching and waiting.

CHAPTER XIX

Alternating Gloom and Sunshine

Mary's extreme weariness and excessive nervousness haunted the lover as he rode back to camp in the starlight. All next day, as he labored with his men upon the foundation of the bridge, the strong undercurrent of his thought was of the poor overwrought girl whom Fate had entrapped into a situation for which apparently there was no immediate relief.

In the early evening as he rode back over "Brown's Hill," he saw Mary walking hurriedly toward him, her troubled look betokening bad news. When within speaking distance she said:

"The thing I feared has happened! While we sat under the tree last night Cephas slept — slept like a child. The children slept. Mrs. Brown, ill as she was, had fallen asleep in her rocking-chair while watching the rest. When I came in, I thought best not to disturb her. I made my bed as usual in the kitchen near the door where I could see and hear everything. About midnight a groan awoke me and, lighting a candle, I went into the front room. All were sound asleep except Cephas. He lay leaning on one elbow, and I saw he was suffering intensely. I hurried to

his side and asked what I could do for him. He took my hand in his and, giving me a grateful look and a slight pressure of the hand, fell forward on his face and ceased to breathe.

"I roused his wife and, to my great relief, she remained calm! She said she had known all along that Cephas had a weak heart and couldn't pull through. She was quick to see that nothing could be done. In an agony of terror — for this was my first real knowledge of death — I found she was determined to lie down by her husband's side. I helped her undress and there — poor woman! — there she has lain ever since! Once in bed by his side her self-possession suddenly gave way and there she lies now, moaning for her man and calling on God to help her fatherless children.

"O, it's dreadful! But what else was she to do! She was too weak to sit up, — and, besides, I'm sure she takes a melancholy satisfaction in being near him — in death as in life.

"I let the children sleep as long as they could this morning; but when they woke and heard their mother moaning, they were simply uncontrollable. I thought their cries would drive me crazy!

"O, darling, this has been the longest day! I never was quite so glad to see you! And, do you know? — I'm going to take you at your word and install you as watcher and nurse in my place to-night. I must get a few hours' sleep or I shall die!"

On Mary's approach the lieutenant dismounted.

Old Grey sympathetically followed at a respectful distance. As they walked down the hill together, Mary leaned wearily on her lover's arm and looked up into his eyes, seeking, and finding there, the strength she so much needed.

As the lieutenant listened to her story he became conscious of a new sense of responsibility. Plans for her immediate relief began to take form in his mind. A few hurried words of explanation, and he remounted his horse and rode rapidly up the hill and back to camp. He dispatched Corporal DeGroot to the Post with orders to return at once to the Cephas Brown cabin with a coffin, and a box in which to enclose it; and, if no coffin could be found, then to procure a pine box. And to bring along with him a preacher — if one could be found — and a nurse to relieve Mary of the care of the Browns. Then turning over the bridge-work to his trusty sergeant, he rode at break-neck pace back to the desolate home of the Browns.

On arriving he at once took command of the situation. He wrote down in his note-book Mary's directions for the care of her patients; brought into the front room everything in the kitchen likely to be wanted by him and the family; spread Mary's bundle of bed-clothes on the floor in the kitchen; and, with a kiss and loving embrace, dismissed the worn-out nurse for the night. He then went out-doors to smoke his pipe while Mary was quieting down for the night. In a few minutes he tip-toed into the room and, lis-

tening at the crack in the door, was relieved on hearing her regular breathing.

Woodruff then proceeded to prepare the body of Cephas Brown for the grave. Under Mrs. Brown's directions, he brought from an old chest the clerical-looking suit of broadcloth and white shirt in which Cephas was married, — "way back in Injiany early in the thirties." The lieutenant had never before officiated as undertaker; but, overcoming his aversion to the task, he entered upon it with a will. This accomplished, finding he could do no more that night, he sat down to partake of the substantial lunch which loving hands had prepared for him.

Meanwhile the widow, weak and worn with grief and long watching, had fallen asleep. Removing his heavy boots and leaning his tired head back in the comfortable Boston rocker, the lieutenant also fell asleep.

Next morning at six, Mary was up and stirring about in the kitchen. Her lover sprang from his chair and hastened to relieve her of her task of building the fire; — but he was too late for the flames in the fireplace were already roaring up the chimney. Eager to assist in some way, he grasped the empty water-bucket, and soon returned with fresh water from the well. Mary then banished him from the kitchen. The aroma of fragrant coffee and the pungent smell of frying bacon told the hungry man outside that breakfast was ready. The lovers sat down to breakfast alone. Both were silent. Soon

Mary's hand reached across the table and clasped that of her lover and, her eyes blinded by tears, and her voice broken with emotion, she exclaimed:

"Darling, what would I have done — what *could* I have done — without you!"

"Notwithstanding these gloomy surroundings, Mary," he responded feelingly, "I have never been happier than I am at this moment — for, you must know, this is the first real service I've ever been able to render you. You hadn't thought of that? — And let me remind you, too, that this is the first meal we ever ate alone together! — and the meal prepared by you, too! — O, but this is delicious coffee. Another cup, please."

The breakfast disposed of, the cow milked, the pigs and chickens fed, — and the Browns still asleep — the two sat down in the kitchen to plan for the day. First, Mary had her quiet laugh over her lover's attempt to milk the cow. "You did *your* part. You couldn't argue down a cow's objections, could you, dear?"

The first thing he wanted to know was where Mrs. Brown would prefer to have her husband's body buried. Mary pointed out the exact spot chosen by Cephas himself, adding: "Who'll dig the grave?"

"Why, I, of course. Who else is there to do it?"

"O you're the man for emergencies!" she exclaimed, with a partial return of her normal high spirits.

While Mary was preparing breakfast for the fam-

ily, the lieutenant hunted in the barn for tools with which to perform this additional service.

From the kitchen window Mary watched with pride the young athlete, in his shirt-sleeves, swinging his pick in air, as he loosened the hard surface of the ground on the slope back of the house. Later, she looked again and found him buried waist deep in the grave he had dug, spade-full quickly following spade-full of the rich brown earth. By the time she had bathed and fed the invalids, washed the dishes and put the house to rights, the lieutenant had finished his task and was "puffing like a porpoise," as he soused his heated face and head with cold water in the basin at the well.

Soon after the noon dinner the corporal came in sight over the hill driving a team of government mules. In the wagon was a pine box, for no coffin was to be had at any price. Seated upon the box was Mrs. DeGroot. Riding on horseback behind the wagon was Elder Spaulding, who had been hailed just as he was leaving town.

The simple service of the Congregational church was performed by the elder at the house and at the grave, and, after a brief prayer for the living, the remains of Cephas Brown were laid to rest.

The motherly Mrs. DeGroot was installed in the cabin, and Mary, with her belongings, was taken home to Sinclair's Point, her lover driving the mules, the corporal mounted on Old Grey.

The greetings over, Mary eagerly announced her

engagement. Her lover was received with open arms. Adam Sinclair was "free to say" that he had respected Lieutenant Woodruff from the very first. He was equally free to say that he had had his misgivings as he had seen and heard of the growing intimacy between the two. He would have preferred, everything else being equal, that his Mary should marry a farmer and settle down to farm life somewhere near the old folks. But he wasn't blind: he could see that everything else wasn't equal, an' couldn't be equal. The girl wasn't cut out for a farmer's wife. Anybody with half an eye could see that. He was free to say also that he wasn't very well pleased with the prospect ahead. It wasn't the thing for them to marry before the lieutenant could return from Leavenworth, and there was no telling when he'd come back. "But," he added hopefully, "things has a way o' workin' out when we can't see any possible way out!"

Mrs. Sinclair serenely settled the question by reminding Adam that "what is to be will be," and begged him to put up a bold front and "encourage the children" all he could. Adam remarked that his wife's reasoning was too deep for him! He would simply add that Woodruff was all right, and would make Mary "a blamed good husband." In conclusion, he wanted to say that he was mighty glad she hadn't "lost her head over that light-headed boatman!"

This last remark was overhead by Susan; but Mary was glad to note that her sister only smiled.

The spring term of school at the Fort was several weeks late, owing to the detention of its teachers. The sisters showed the effects of their trying experiences in the sick room. But soon the recurrence of regular school-room duties, with the loving sympathy of the dear school-children and their parents, with the special efforts made by officers and soldiers at the Fort to make the young women happy in their work, with the ripening of love in the case of one, all tended to bring back the color to their cheeks, the wonted brightness to their eyes, and the wonted ring to their voices.

It soon became evident to Mary that Susan was not wearing her heart out with secret love of Charlie Millard; for she talked with the utmost freedom of the boatman's faults and failings, and — more significant still — she did not hesitate to praise him. Once, when rallied on her treatment of Charlie, Susan laughingly remarked:

"O he'll never let any woman break his heart! His affections are too near the surface."

It was also noted by Mary that Susan, grown somewhat reticent of late, — doubtless the result of her recent embarrassments, — was receiving the attentions of Sergeant Hill, a manly young fellow whose tastes and inclinations were congenial to both and for whom Lieutenant Woodruff had frequently ex-

pressed a fast-growing regard. Hill was the lieutenant's right-hand man in road-making and bridge-building; and, more than that, he could instruct them all in practical farming. His term of enlistment would expire in the spring; and it was known that after the departure of Lieutenant Grier, the sergeant would be left in charge of government property at the Fort, and in due time would be empowered to turn the buildings over to the new county of Polk, to which the land set apart for the Fort would in due time revert.

Whether the sergeant could take the place the riverman had made for himself in Susan Sinclair's life was the question which, next to her own heart-problems, was uppermost in the elder sister's mind. She was grateful to Captain Allen for giving the sergeant all the time he would need to win Susan's doubly-barricaded heart, and was hopeful that, even if she herself should miss the great happiness she craved, her sister might enter into her own by right of her rare womanhood and become a happy wife and mother and the mistress of a happy home.

CHAPTER XX

"The Midnight Gun"

At last the day of days to many a home-seeker — Saturday, the eleventh of October, 1845, — was ushered in; but not as other days, by cock-crow, the owl's hoot or the loon's mournful cry.

Soon after midnight the air was tremulous with the push and stir of life. There was a rustling of leaves as men, on foot, on horseback, in prairie schooners and mounted on heavily loaded lumber-wagons, parting the thick brush of the bottom-land, pushed on across the meridian line marking the eastern limit of "the new reservation" that day thrown open to settlers.

Speculators flitted here and there in their waking dreams of possession. Actual settlers, a small army of determined men to whom no hardship was too great, no burden too heavy, tramped or rode, or alternately tramped and rode, through the forest and across the prairie, fording streams made well-nigh impassable by the late September rains, — each bent on one and the same purpose, — the location of a claim in the favored region vacated by the Indians.

Prior to the expiration of the Indian title, the fortunate few who for various reasons had been permitted by the commandant of the Fort to settle upon

land inside the reservation, had taken the precaution to measure and stake their respective claims. The land thus preëmpted made scarcely more than a dot here and there upon the sectional map, so wide was the area of the valley and prairie included in the reservation. Even with the advantage possessed by these favored ones, it was thought best by them to be on the ground at the firing of "the midnight gun" and thus, by actual occupancy, "hold down their claims."

Mary and Susan Sinclair had been far from indifferent to the opportunity of the hour. Captain Allen, keenly alive to the service these pioneer educators had rendered the garrison and the community that had grown up about it, had assured them of his aid in establishing and perfecting a claim for each. He had formally deputed Lieutenant Woodruff and Sergeant Hill "to aid the afore-mentioned claimants in the selection of satisfactory sites, also to assist them in making preliminary surveys, to stake the claims in advance of the formal opening of the reservation, — and on the night preceding the opening, to escort the claimants to their preëmpted domain, there to serve as their body-guard until daylight; and then, on being relieved by a detail of dragoons from the Fort, to act as their escort back to their lodging — that the incident might not seriously interfere with the highly important educational work in which the young ladies are engaged."

The selection of their claims necessitated several early evening rides on horseback along the winding

river, attended by their officially designated escorts. They could not be induced even to look at the many choice tracts of open prairie all about them, so deep-rooted was their affection for the stream they had learned to love in their childhood and during the idyllic months they had spent in their wilderness home unconsciously awaiting the call of Fate.

They had finally made choice of adjoining quarters on a wooded bluff about two miles northwest from the Fort, an eminence overlooking a beautiful bend in the river and densely wooded hills beyond, with a near view of willows bending to the water's edge and, well up from the river bank, tall elms garnished with riotously luxuriant vines.

The fact that sentiment, and not "horse-sense," had controlled their choice rendered almost unnecessary the provision made by the commandant for the protection of their claims. The claimants suspected as much, but were eager to experience in person all the sensations of veritable land-seekers; and, with two such brave and interesting — and interested — protectors, they "wouldn't have missed it for the world!"

Entirely free from the prudishness of the period as absurdly evident in fashionable circles farther east, the two young women had early provided themselves with substantial riding habits consisting of top-boots and loose-flowing skirts, anticipating by a full half-century the safe and sane riding habits of to-day. Thus attired, scorning assistance, they

sprang into their saddles and were off, challenging their escorts to overtake them.

The soldiers, better mounted, were soon alongside. The party followed a bridle-path through a dense forest of oaks, the arch of leaves overhead shutting out the light of the stars. But for an occasional opening to the north and the flaring light of torches in the rear, they would have been in well-nigh impenetrable darkness.

The moon had gone down in the wake of the setting sun, but the October night was unusually bright with stars. The whispering of the wind as it pushed through the dry oak-leaves reminded Susan of "the trailing garments of the night" and "the farewells of ghosts."

Their escorts confessed their own inability to carry the highly poetical likeness any farther; but the sergeant went so far as to admit that even a soldier might find it "a trifle creepy" in the woods after dark. The lieutenant, satirically remarked on the folly of the attempts he had made to interest the claimants in "mere soil" as against their favorite river view, "fortified" as they were "by poetry at every point!"

Nearing the river on the north, they took the wagon-road leading westward. Not long before midnight they overtook a group of settlers, each bearing a torch. At sight of men in uniform the newcomers were about to take to the woods, for they were well

aware that, in their eagerness to be on the ground, they had forfeited their right to land within the reservation. But, finding the soldiers wholly prëoccupied, they trudged on in silence.

As our little party rode on, each waiting for the new day, they heard the signal for which eager hundreds had waited and which many had anticipated.

A moment later, "the Midnight Gun," fired by Captain Allen in person was answered by another at the trading post across the river.

Then from the north, and later from the west, came the faint reverberation of howitzers and musket-shots.

Then followed a miracle! A torch-bearer turned to the sergeant and remarked, "The woods is full of 'em!" And he was right! Forth from the woods on either side of the roadway came scores of men each with a pick and an axe. As a compromise with their regard for authority, they had invaded the reservation and, secreting themselves in the forest, had waited the signal ushering in the new day. At the cross-road from the upper ferry, near the river bend, our party encountered a long train of westward-moving wagons, some drawn by oxen, others by horses, — all heavy-laden with the rude farm implements and plain furniture of the period, with men and boys trudging on at the side, and with anxious women peering out from improvised coverings. All were strangely silent — all, intensely in earnest, and eager to reach

their destination — evidently knowing just where they were going. The solemnity was broken by a youthful voice raised in song:

> I'm monarch of all I survey;
> My right there is none to dispute!

Presently a chorus well-nigh drowned the original voice. Unable to repeat the words of the second stanza, the chorus vigorously hummed the tune till they wore it out. Then the boy chorister started "From Greenland's Icy Mountains," and all sang the familiar hymn with tremendous lung-power, the quartette from the Fort joining in. The zest with which they rolled out the refrain:

> Salvation, O Salvation!
> It is a joyful sound! —

coupled with the general eagerness to "arrive" — conveyed a strong suggestion of the earthly — even earthy — salvation which these sturdy home-seekers had in mind.

Veering to the north from the main road, the four whose fortunes we are following soon neared their destination, — the bluff overlooking the river. The much satirized "view" which met their gaze compelled the men of the party to concede all that had been claimed for it. Beautiful by day, it was a dream of beauty by night. The effect was that of a narrow stream of gold studded with stars, the water flowing eastward between banks of black shadows, up from which rose the real river banks overhung with foli-

age, outlined by the blending of rounded tree-tops. Farther north the pale-blue hills lost themselves in the mist rising from the valley.

Prosaically breaking the silence, Sergeant Hill ironically congratulated the sisters on the promise of a glorious future for the claimants "as producers!"

The lieutenant, in the same mood, quizzed Susan as to the way she would meet this, that and the other emergency.

The ready answer was: "Sufficient unto the day is the emergency thereof."

Mary came to her sister's relief with: "When we come to a bridge, rest assured, we'll cross it. — Of course, if we find we can't, we'll have to call in the professional services of the distinguished designer and builder of Four-Mile Creek bridge!"

The lieutenant joined heartily in the general laughter at his expense.

Catching a glimpse of the officers' tent which, she had been informed, had that day been put up for the sisters' occupancy that night, Mary spurred her horse and was first to reach it. Dismounting, she entered and with quick look saw it all — the two cots, the camp-chairs, the portable table, a rug, a candle — which she proceeded to light, — and the Sinclair family trunk, which had been sent out in the quartermaster's wagon with the outfit.

"Come, Sue!" she exclaimed, "isn't this just too lovely! Everything necessary for our comfort — even to a looking glass! And all for one night! O, I

could stay here always!" Then, turning to the two men standing in the opening, she exclaimed, "O, I thank you so much — more than I can express in words!"

Susan's happy face and acquiescent nod told of her delight in every detail.

After tethering the horses for the night, the escorts went past the small army tent which had been erected for their own use, back to the larger tent to bid their wards good-night. Finding the two comfortably seated on the camp-chairs under the canopy flap of their tent, though the hour was late, — or early rather, they gladly threw themselves down at the feet of their conquerors.

"This is, indeed, a night of nights, too beautiful to waste in sleep!" exclaimed the elder sister enthusiastically.

"A night to remember to our latest day," responded the lieutenant.

"Didn't I tell you?" continued Mary, including with a sweep of her arm the compelling beauty of the scene. Then she added, in a tone so low that part of the time she seemed to be dreaming:

"You soldiers who come and go, can only guess how dear this river is to us. It flows through all our early recollections. When we were little tots down yonder in Jefferson county, we paddled in it, and waded in it, and were taught to swim in it. And when the spring freshets came, with slender pike-poles we used to help Father — he was 'Pa' in those

days — we used to help Pa fish for drift-wood, and — would you believe it? — we, all together, used to haul out of the river enough wood to supply us all the year round! The Des Moines was to us, in a small way, what the Nile is to the natives along its banks — a veritable godsend.

"And — don't you remember, Sue? — a jolly little old raftsman with a big beard once carried us a mile or more down the river, letting us out by the old dam, telling us to 'scoot for home and save a lickin'?' O, but that was a great experience. I can still feel the writhing of the raft as it rushed down over the rapids! And I haven't forgotten the shock I received when the raft bunted against a rock and my end of it rose! I can still hear the awful — literally awful — grating sound with which, with the help of the current, the giant freed himself from the rock!

"And later, when we had grown to be big girls — Academy girls they called us — we used to go down to the bluffs almost every pleasant summer evening, and tell over and over the legends we had heard from the Indians, and stories of trappers and raftsmen and boatmen — all centering about this same dear old river.

"You soldiers are here to-day, and may be in far-away Texas or Mexico a month from now; but we old maids, with our almost pagan river-worship, have solemnly promised each other to bring father and mother here soon as the baby of the family marries

off — if not before — and to spend the rest of our days here. And we intend to make provision in our wills for our burial somewhere along this bank."

The lieutenant looked the appreciation he felt, as he caught these precious glimpses of the childhood and youth of the woman he loved; but the allusion to Texas and Mexico silenced him, for it brought before him in all too vivid light the inevitable separation just ahead, and, sadder still, the actual fact of war with Mexico.

For many minutes the four sat in silence, looking out upon the river and the pale-blue hills beyond.

In after years no memory of that night of nights remained more vivid than that early morning hour when the spell of silence was upon all, and souls came together without need of spoken word.

The spell was finally broken by the distant sound of a voice in command, and later, the swish and tumble of water. Walking to the edge of the bluff they saw a long black boat gliding from the starlight into the shadow far to the east and toward the north shore of the river; and then they heard the grating sound of a keel dragging along the shore; then the sound of ropes thrown out, and then the almost human screech of ropes drawn taut. And out of the silence came a voice, scarcely audible, and yet familiar, followed by the louder chorus of voices singing:

> Down the river, down the river,
> Down the O-h-i-o!

All exchanged glances and smiled, for the identity

of the singer-in-chief was recognized at once. Evidently the riverman and his crew were tied up for the night, preparatory to a claim-hunting expedition of their own.

CHAPTER XXI

Thanksgiving Day at the Garrison

The last holiday on which town and garrison came together socially was Thanksgiving Day — Thursday, November 27, 1845. The day was not wholly given over to jollification, for citizens and soldiers, between whom existed the most cordial relations, solemnly realized that "the break-up" must soon come.

In the forenoon religious services were held at the trading post, and they were "fairly well attended." The Sinclairs, Lieutenant Woodruff and Sergeant Hill were in their places and sang with true thanksgiving spirit and yet with a suggestion of sadness in their song.

Following the Thanksgiving dinner at the Fort and in the homes of the settlers, the afternoon was given over to a prolonged "turkey shoot" and at the same time a "beeve" — a long-distance contest with a live steer as the target. The opening contest for the two fattest turkeys on the roost was between six crack-shots from the country and six from the garrison. The garrison won first honors by only a single point. Free-for-all contests followed. Long before sundown it became evident that the soldiers had no

monopoly in marksmanship. Whether the target was forty, eighty or a hundred yards distant "honors were easy" as between yeomen and soldiers. Many a young farmer went home that night with a turkey strung across his shoulder and a self-complacent story on his tongue. The prizes won by the garrison were shared in common, after the officers and Mrs. Cameron had been generously remembered.

The final event, the "beeve" — at two hundred yards — was narrowed down to Sergeant Hill and Charlie Millard. Everybody took sides as to the outcome, and the interest was intense. Suffice to say that the riverman won the prize — to the keen disappointment of the soldiers — but not including the loser himself! The sergeant so cordially grasped the hand of the winner and congratulated him so heartily that the knowing ones entertained the suspicion that the chivalrous dragoon had purposely shot wide of the mark in the hope that his apparently defeated rival for the hand of Susan Sinclair might "chirk up a bit."

Millard received the congratulations of his friends with less than his wonted high spirits. A crowd of admirers gathered round him and demanded a speech.

"Boys," said he, "I ain't no orator an' you know it. But while you're here I'll jest tell you I've hired Bill Thompson — you all know Bill, the butcher — to cut up the beef-critter I jest won, an' give the man with the biggest fam'ly his first choice of cuts, an'

so on down to you boys that ain't hitched up yet — that is, if there's any left.

"Boys, this comes pretty nigh bein' a good-bye from me. I'm off for Keokuk to-morrow mornin', luck to you an' be good to yourselves!"

"You ain't goin' to leave for good, be you, Charlie?" inquired the butcher, as he whetted his knife for the operation before him.

"I may be back inside o' six weeks, an' I may stay all winter; — an' then again, you may *never* see me again."

The "Farewell Ball" in the evening, was referred to afterward as "a brilliant affair;" but, in fact, the gayety of the occasion was somewhat sobered by the shadow of the coming event — the forthcoming separation of families, lovers and friends.

Under the supervision of floor-manager Millard the floor of the ware-room had been swept, scrubbed and waxed for the occasion. In addition to the customary fiddle and bass-viol, a cornet gave still more tone to the event!

Charlie had in large measure, recovered his wonted spirits and was literally "at home to his friends." He made everybody acquainted with everybody and supplied partners for every woman and girl who could be induced to dance, for the men were in a large majority.

Quick to note the arrival of "The Sinclairs," Millard rushed to meet them and engaged a dance with

each. He was evidently bent on going down with flying colors.

Lieutenant Woodruff, a trifle more erect in bearing and with a mere suggestion of a smile on his immobile face, proudly bore on his arm the woman with whom he had linked his fate.

Sergeant Hill, happy — but not as happy as he hoped to be — fell in behind the stalwart lieutenant, very conscious of the demure little woman by his side, and both he and Susan embarrassingly conscious of the prophecies of their match-making friends.

After a giddy whirl with Charlie, Mary Sinclair found a seat by her lover, who had been content to watch the woman he adored as she moved gracefully through the intricate maze of waltzers. In glad response to her expressed desire for fresh air, the lieutenant led his bride-elect out under the starlight and to a rustic seat on the river bank. Mary was sure her lover had some new message for her, and she was not mistaken. Not a word was spoken until both were seated, then with his wonted directness, he began:

"Dear heart, I start to-morrow!"

"O, not to-morrow!" exclaimed Mary, nervously clasping his hand, her eyes filling with tears.

"Yes, Captain Allen informed me on my way to Mrs. Cameron's that Lieutenant Grier, who was to command the detachment of dragoons escorting the

first two-hundred Indians across-country to Fort Leavenworth, is too ill to endure the fatigue of the long ride, and I must go in his stead. My friend, the captain, knows what this means to me and would gladly delay the march: but the Indians are growing restless and Pow-e-shiek is spreading discontent among them; and delay would be dangerous."

"Can you blame them? Can you blame Pow-e-shiek?" asked Mary, to gain time until she could better control her emotions.

"No, and yet I had hoped he might see the inevitable and make the best of it. But I have studied the Indian character and think I know just how he feels. The smallest boy in your school puts one and one together and so makes two. In the Indian mind one and one, together, remain separate entities. Your small boy can be made to see an effect from a given cause. The Indian mind stubbornly refuses to see the relation of cause and effect. These woods and streams and prairies which for years have supplied the Indians with occupation and subsistence are swarming with white settlers eager to fell trees and till the soil and conserve the water into power to run their mills. These conditions render the emigration of the Indians inevitable. But even the shrewd Pow-e-shiek can't see it! To him Government is all powerful and could, if it would, turn back the tide of civilization, — could, if it would, restore the hunting and fishing, and should not hold his people to the agreement made three years ago."

Here Mary endeavored to interrupt her lover; but he continued:

"Let me free my mind first, dear, and then I will let you have the floor. As I see my present duty, the situation is not to my liking. I am chagrined to find I must say good-bye to the constructive work which means so much to me and assume the role of chief to a squad of mounted police! But while the duties ahead of me are distasteful, they must be performed."

Noting her impatience, he added, "I'm not quite through yet, Mary. You remember that night on the bluff overlooking the river, you rallied Hill and me on the fact that we soldiers were here to-day but, a few weeks later, we might be thousands of miles away? Those true words have come back to me again and again. I have asked myself many times whether I did right to win your love without —

"No, hear me out, Mary. I know what you would say and I want to leave with you all the comfort there is in the situation — cold comfort at best. On reaching Leavenworth, I shall investigate and if I find our war with Mexico is just, I shall serve until the war closes and then make haste to resign. But if I find my worst fears confirmed, I shall resign at once — though I know what it means to do so in face of an enemy. In either case, if life is spared me, I'll soon be back to claim my bride, and all will end well. Dear heart, are you equal to it — this uncertainty and the weary waiting?"

Having fully recovered her self-possession and courage, Mary turned her radiant face to his and, with the joy which follows perfect understanding, gave answer from her inmost soul:

"Darling, it long since ceased to be a question of endurance with me. I can't conceive of a time in the future when I could say, 'The end has come — I'll wait no longer.' My question — the question my heart had long been asking — was answered, you remember, that night we sat under the oak tree and saw the moon go down. It was answered for all time — and for eternity as well. *Your* question, also raised that night, remains unanswered still; but I know you will answer it soon and answer it conscientiously. I would not have you swerve from the path of duty, even though it lead you to the field of battle. Should duty call you, or seem to call you, to Mexico, I'll try to be brave and patient; but should you see your way clear to a speedy return to me, I'll be, O, so glad! —

"But my beloved, you *must* have sleep. Four o'clock is only a few hours away. Take me home, I beg of you! I can't go back to the ball-room, — take me home and give yourself the rest you so much need."

A few minutes later, in the shadow of the porch, the lovers said their good-byes, over and over again, sealing their vows with many a kiss and fond embrace.

Hastening to her room, the grief-burdened one threw herself down on the bed and buried her face in

her pillow — that her sobs might not distress Mrs. Cameron, who slept in an adjoining room.

Susan was quick to note her sister's absence, and, summoning her escort, followed her home.

Finding Mary sobbing violently, she knelt by the bedside and burying her face in her sister's loosened hair and covering the hot cheeks with kisses, in a low voice she asked:

"What is it, Mary, darling? What has happened?"

With enforced calmness Mary answered:

"It hasn't happened yet, sister dear: but — O, how can I bear it! — the blow will fall before to-morrow's sunrise! He has received orders to take Lieutenant Grier's place, and they start to-morrow morning, soon after four! Don't ask me any more questions now, dear; but put me to bed as though I were a little child. O, I'm so tired! Come to bed, dear, and comfort me! When the light is out and I feel your arms about me, I'll tell you all there is to tell."

Two hours, later, Susan, worn with fatigue and anxiety, fell asleep still holding her sister in her arms.

Soon after, disengaging herself, and bolstering her aching head well up in bed, Mary lay watching for the dawn. Her purpose was to respond to the bugle-call from the Fort, don her clothes and take her place at the front door. In due time the cavalcade would pass by and she would have one last look at her lover as, mounted on Old Grey, he would ride

past the door and out into the dark. And, should he look that way, she would surprise him with a parting salute and, should it be light enough, she might once more see his stern face light up with a smile.

And while she watched and waited for the dawn she fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXII

The Departure of the Indians from Fort Des Moines

For months Captain Allen had been busily engaged in preparation for the departure of the Indians for the new reservation beyond the Missouri, in fulfilment of the treaty made three years before. His buyers had scoured the country for supplies. The quartermaster had for weeks been working his men night and day packing supplies for the long march. Several hundred Indians, regardless of the treaty, were bent on remaining through the winter, and the captain had obtained permission from the War Department to retain the Fort until Spring, thus giving ample time to complete the transfer and at the same time to dispose of the government's property. Meantime the dragoons were busy riding over the country "assisting" the reluctant ones to prepare for exile.

Late in September about two hundred Foxes led by Pow-e-shiek, after drawing their annuities, joined the Pot-ta-wat-ta-mies in northwestern Missouri. A number of Sacs had wandered off in various directions to escape the dreaded exile, and not a few of them, farther up the river, suffered terrible privations during the winter which followed. Chief Ke-o-

kuk, keeping faith with the government, had rounded up several hundred Indians, chiefly Sacs, and these were in camp near the Fort awaiting orders to move.

Captain Allen remained with Lieutenant Grier at the Fort, having dispatched Lieutenant Woodruff and a small detachment of dragoons, with about two hundred Sacs and Foxes across-country early on the morning following Thanksgiving Day. The veteran Indian Agent, John Beach, had personal charge of the Indians and their belongings; but he depended upon the lieutenant for support in case of individual insubordination or combination to obstruct or otherwise retard the march.

The start was to have been made at four o'clock — more than two hours before sunrise, — the early hour chosen as a precaution against the interference of any considerable number of those opposed to Ke-o-kuk's purpose.

The well disciplined dragoons were mounted and ready to start long before the indolent Indians could be routed out. It was after five before the cavalcade started. There was no demonstration over the departure. The mounted Indians were lined up in fours with the imposing chief Ke-o-kuk, in bright array and splendidly mounted, at the head of the troop. By his side rode Indian Agent, John Beach, small, wiry — a rare compound of nervous force and good-nature. Following came old Pash-e-pa-ho, Wa-pel-lo and other minor chiefs, all well-mounted on ponies.

At the outset Beach did his best to provoke a smile

from the phlegmatic Ke-o-kuk, but finally gave it up, finding it too early in the day! The mounted braves, half-clad and blanketed, but apparently impervious to the cold, followed in grim silence looking not to right or left. After these was a straggling line of Indians on foot. Then came the covered wagons alive with squaws and pappooses; and finally the wagons containing quartermaster stores and commisary supplies. Riding alongside, singly and in pairs, were the dragoons serving as military escort, headed by Lieutenant Woodruff on the right.

As the procession moved westward along the one street of the embryo village, the clatter of the horses' hoofs and the lumbering roll of wagon wheels woke Mary Sinclair from her uneasy sleep. In her dream she had seen the lieutenant half-way down in a grave he was digging; and, when she asked him whose grave it was, he looked up from his task, wiped the perspiration from his brow and grimly answered "Mine."

She woke with a start and rushed to the open window, — and none too soon, for there rode the stately Ke-o-kuk and, not far behind him, her lover, erect, pale-faced from lack of sleep, as grim and solemn as the brown-faced men above whom he towered.

Woodruff was quick to see the face he loved and the white outline of the form he had held in his embrace. As he lifted his hat to salute his Mary, his stolid features relaxed into a smile — a smile which lingered in her memory during the long months that

followed. Instinctively she threw a kiss — and then another and still another; and, as regardless of the men about him as though they were not there, he returned the salutation with an intensity that thrilled her.

Hastily brushing away the tears that filled her eyes, she looked again; but he was gone — only a line of unresponsive army-wagons met her gaze. Well-nigh blinded by tears, she crept back to bed. Her face buried in a pillow, she vainly struggled to repress her sobs. The convulsive effort wakened her sister with a start.

"What is it, Mary?" inquired Susan, half aroused.

"O nothing, dear, except — except — the light has gone out of my life!"

The faint rumble of army wagons in the distance rendered unnecessary any further questioning and, clasping her sister tightly in her arms, Susan sought to comfort her with:

"Don't try any longer to keep back the tears, dear heart. It will do you good to cry as you used to when you were a child. I'll take mother's place as well as I can."

CHAPTER XXIII

The Flag Hauled Down from Fort Des Moines

The departure of the first installment of Indians for the new reservation was followed by vigorous efforts on the part of Captain Allen to round up the widely scattered remainder. Learning that a number of both Sacs and Foxes were encamped at a point about thirty miles farther up the Des Moines, the commandant dispatched Lieutenant Granger to Elk Rapids to "assist" — really to compel — the refractory Indians to report at the Fort and thus avert inevitable starvation. The lieutenant first tried persuasion, but his auditors responded only with "No go! No go!" and he was compelled to corral them and march them down the river to the Fort.

Rumors came that Pow-e-shiek, who had led several score of Foxes into the Pottawattomie country in northern Missouri, had quarreled with the settlers in southwestern Iowa and that bloodshed was inevitable. The captain persuaded three civilians — friends of the disgruntled chief — to visit both parties to the dispute and induce them to arbitrate their differences. The visit was successful and the men reported that Pow-e-shiek and his retainers and their families were on their way to "the big Muddy."

The remaining dragoons at the Fort, assisted by a

detachment from Fort Atkinson, spent much of the following winter relieving the distress of isolated camps and assisting their occupants to remove to the Fort preparatory to their departure for the southwest.

On the first day of January, 1846, Captain Allen reported that less than two hundred Sacs and Foxes then remained in the vicinity and that in his judgment all, or nearly all, would voluntarily remove to the new reservation before the next annual payment.

Late in February came the order from the War Department for the abandonment of Fort Des Moines. Captain Allen had gone on with a detachment of dragoons escorting nearly two hundred Indians; and Lieutenant Grier was directed to depart for Fort Leavenworth as soon as practicable, escorting the few yet remaining, leaving in control of the Fort "one steady non-commissioned officer and two privates, as care-takers, until further orders." The "one steady non-commissioned officer" to be left in charge was Susan's lover, Sergeant Hill.

On the tenth day of March, 1846, occurred an event of historic import as marking the end of military occupation in interior Iowa, and the assumption of civil authority in the embryo state.

On the forenoon of that day, in the presence of the few dragoons yet remaining at the Fort, a score or more of indifferent Indians and several hundred very much interested civilians, the flag which for three years had floated over the Fort, an emblem of au-

thority exercised for the protection of the weak against the strong, was hauled down and folded away.

Lieutenant Grier addressed the assembled citizens thanking them for the many courtesies they had extended the garrison and assuring them that Captain Allen and his brother officers and every infantryman and dragoon who had ever served at Fort Des Moines would each treasure to his latest day very many precious memories of the life at the Forks. He was grateful in that the flag that day to be hauled down was unstained by dishonor or with the blood of any human being; that the Power which it represented had not been wielded in the service of any interest except that of a common humanity.

Turning to a representative of Governor Chambers, present on invitation, he deputized him to convey to his chief the congratulations of the officers and of the soldiery on the rapid progress latterly made toward statehood and on the fact that Iowa would soon have its well-earned place in the galaxy of States.

Then, turning to the supervisors of the new county of Polk, he expressed keen gratification over the fact that he had been empowered to turn over to them the section of land which three years before had been set apart as a garrison, and that on that section was sure to rise not only the future county-seat of Polk but also, in due time, he doubted not, the future metropolis of a great State.

He had been directed to turn over to Sergeant Hill — whom the citizens of the new community all knew and highly esteemed — all the property of the Government until such time as the same might be disposed of. He took pleasure in leaving with them as the representative of his government not only a good and trusty man as specified by the Department, but also a true soldier who was soon to become a citizen — and a citizen of their own county, and was soon — as he had been unofficially informed — to take to himself a helpmate from among their number. His parting injunction was that the townspeople "allow neither matrimony nor the mere matter of money" to interfere with the splendid progress made by the two missionaries of culture who came among them some two years ago on invitation of Captain Allen, and who "by their winning graces, strength of characted and ability and attainments" had built up in their midst — in yonder school-house — an institution of learning of which they all might well be proud.

The speech was followed by hearty and prolonged applause.

At the pre-arranged signal, — the playing of "Hail, Columbia" by the drum-and-fife corps of ex-soldiers — the boys and girls of the school came running across the green, headed by "Jim" and followed by the two teachers, who had dismissed the children that they might witness the historic ceremony.

Entirely unaware of the allusion made to herself and Sergeant Hill, Susan unaffectedly went forward to meet the Sergeant, and could not even surmise his embarrassment. As it turned out, the young dragoon had not as yet been sufficiently assured that he would fare any better than Millard, so engrossed was Susan in the work in which she was engaged. With the perversity of most men of his period, it had not occurred to him that the woman he loved might possibly learn to love him and still retain a love for her chosen work!

When the moment arrived for hauling down the flag, much to her surprise, and without even guessing the open secret which caused a general smile to pass over the faces of the audience, Lieutenant Grier placed the ropes in Susan's hands, assuring her that it was due her, the youngest pioneer teacher of Fort Des Moines, to perform the simple ceremony that should terminate military rule and inaugurate the reign of civil law in its stead. And thus, amid the shouting and hand-clapping of children and adults the flag was hauled down and the new era was formally inaugurated.

CHAPTER XXIV

Captain Millard looks in upon an Event at Sinclair's Point

An hour or more after the departure of the Indians from the Fort, the Agatha started on her last trip of the season from Fort Des Moines to Keokuk.

Word had come to Millard that the owners of the new steamer, the "Demoine Belle," were looking for a man of his calibre and experience to captain the new boat. Charlie had acquired a reputation as the safest and bravest riverman on the Des Moines. He knew every bend in the stream and every rock, rapids, sand-bar and snag in its tortuous channel from the Forks to Keokuk. He had had a brief experience on the Ohio as a fireman, and knew how to run an engine. He concluded to try for the captaincy — "no harm in tryin' even if you don't make good."

Millard boarded the Agatha and in due time reached Keokuk. He at once arranged a meeting with the owners of the new steamer and was not long in convincing them that he was the man they were looking for. He "signed" for next season and, indisposed to "hang around all winter," secured a job of stage-driving, with the understanding that with the first northward flight of geese, he was to "throw up his job" and report to the steamer company,

helping in the organization of a crew for the season's campaign.

With the first indiscreet robin came Charlie, reporting for duty and eager for work. But the new boat was not quite ready and the ice still remained in the river. After organizing a crew of "sober, reliable and experienced men," he sat down to wait. He waited until late in March.

One day as he sat smoking in front of the Keokuk House, his old friend Johnnie Thrift, the garrison tailor, came along and took a seat beside him. Overjoyed to see some one from "up the river" who could give him all the news, he at once began to ply the tailor with questions. The two old friends ate supper together and sat up till after midnight going over more thoroughly the recent run of events at the Fort. After confiding in Charlie the fact that he was headed for the East to find him a wife, Thrift took a new lead suggested by the all-important fact to which he had referred.

"By the way, Charlie," said he, "if you're ever goin' to marry that Sinclair girl — I don't mean the oldest: she's good as married already; if you're ever goin' to hitch up with Sue Sinclair, you'd better be dustin' your clothes. I've seen that dragoon sergeant, Hill, an' her a-singin' together in church an' walkin' home together after church more'n once. An' one moonlight night I seen 'em settin' on the bench by the river. She was doin' all the talkin', an' he noddin' his head once in a while as much as to

say 'You're all right, Sue.' Now, Charlie, I can't think Sue's goin' to marry a man that does so much thinkin' an' ain't got anything to say back, 'specially when she's stirred up as she was that night. What she needs is a jollier like you, that'll give 'er as good as she hands out — now ain't I right, Charlie?"

Charlie puffed on his pipe and said nothing.

The tailor continued: "Sue stood a good deal of your company when you was nothin' but a boss poleman on a keel-boat, — didn't she? Wall now, how's it goin' to be when the captain of the Demoine Belle comes courtin' her?

"But here I am mixin' up with matters that ain't none o' my business! One woman's enough worry for *one* man, as I'm likely to find out."

With that Johnnie went to his room leaving Charlie with something to think about.

Charlie's mental processes were simple and rapid. Next morning he was seated with the driver on the box of the outgoing Frink & Walker stage headed for Fort Des Moines. The mud was deep and at times the two span of horses had all they could do to keep going. With the aid of a farmer's team pressed into the service, the driver had all he could do to reach Fort Des Moines by midnight after three days on the way!

Early one evening, the stage reached the fork of the road leading to Sinclair's Point; and, acting on the impulse of the moment, Charlie concluded to make a night of it with his old friend the squire.

Instructing the driver to throw off his carpet-bag at Grout's and, giving his fellow passengers a cheery "so long!" he jumped off the moving stage into the mud. When last seen by the driver, he was picking his way along the side of the road to the Point.

On nearing his destination, Charlie observed with astonishment that the double-cabin — enlarged since he was there last — was brilliantly lighted with candles in the windows and on the mantle and tables! There were more than a dozen blanketed horses tied to trees along the edge of the woods, and two or three farm-wagons stood out in the open. What could it mean?

It was now quite dark, and he could see without being seen. If, as was probable, it was a church sociable, or a donation for the circuit-rider, he would join the party. He'd give 'em something to laugh at!

He *must* see the squire and have a confidential talk with him. He must know where he was at. If he should find that any of the guests were booked for the spare bed, he'd take to the hay-mow. He'd slept on a hay-mow many a time and had never slept better.

He drew near the cabin and in the shadow of the great oak near the front door he could see all that was transpiring in the front room.

Guests everywhere! — and all eagerly looking toward the stairway leading to the newly added front upper-room. He followed their gaze and saw a man in the uniform of a dragoon slowly coming down the

stairs! On his arm leaned a woman attired in white and with a long white veil covering her face! The couple reached the foot of the stairs and took their places under a canopy of hemlock boughs. A tall, slender man wearing a black buttoned-up coat, whom he recognized as Elder Spaulding, the pioneer preacher of the region south of the Fort, stepped forward, book in hand.

Surely, it was a wedding! And the bride was the coveted Susan! And the groom was none other than his eleventh-hour rival, Sergeant Hill! There by the side of the bride stood Mary, simply gowned in white — and strangely pale! She lifted the veil from her sister's face, and Millard gazed spell-bound! Never had Susan Sinclair looked so radiantly happy. She looked up at the man by her side, and the man in the shadow outside, speaking aloud as was his wont when alone, exclaimed, "She never gave *me* such a look as that! That tells the story!"

He watched the ceremony proceed and for the first time realized that his dream was over. With a curious interest in the ceremony that had robbed him of his dream, he noted the simple plainness of the bride's wedding gown; the beautiful coils of her thrush-brown hair, the momentary pallor of her cheeks quickly followed by a flush of color rivaling his memory of Mary's crimson cheeks — now so pale! He saw the bridegroom stoop and kiss the bride, and then he saw Mary, with tear-filled eyes and a radiant smile, embrace her sister and shower

kisses upon her lips and cheeks and forehead and then again upon her lips. The bridegroom, just a little embarrassed, stooped and kissed his newly acquired sister on her upturned cheek. Mary then made way for the father and mother, both of whom went through the ordeal rather stiffly and yet with evident satisfaction. The ordeal over, the mother nervously gave way to tears, — though smiling all the while. The younger members of the family followed and were "glad when the fuss was over." The preacher with a bless-you-my-children air and a professional smile on his strong face, formally kissed the bride's cheek and shook hands with the groom, evidently wishing the young couple much joy and many happy returns of the day. Then, with many a jest and many a hearty kiss, the neighbors and friends paid their respects to the happy pair.

Still fascinated by the unanticipated sight, Charlie watched his successful rival lead the bride to the dining-room, followed by the preacher and the family. The guests took seats and were served in the front room. Charlie stole softly into the shadow of another tree and looked in upon the wedding supper. He saw the preacher ask a blessing on the feast and presumably upon the happy bride and groom. He noted the substantial appetite of the wedded pair and Mary's brave endeavor to seem to eat, as she conversed with the preacher. Later, under the inspiration of cold turkey and tempting wedding cake and coffee — the aroma of which reached the lone

watcher outside — he noted the unbending of stiff backs and the loosening of tongues previously bound by the restraints of the occasion. Jests were passed round and loud laughter followed. So absorbed was he in the scene enacted before him that when a horse on the edge of the woods whinnied a shrill hurry-call to his master, the watcher gave a start, and looked about him for a convenient retreat.

He studied the face of his rival and was frank to concede that the sergeant was not so bad looking! He thoughtfully gazed upon the face of the bride and finally said to himself:

"I'm just beginnin' to see the reason Sue give me the go-by for him! The sergeant fits into Sue's make-up a darn sight better'n I ever could. *I* can make 'er laugh when there ain't anything to laugh at. Sue needs to run up against a man like me once in a while — somebody that can shake 'er up: but I can see she could git too much of Charlie Millard — I do myself sometimes! She'd ruther see Hill settin' round of an evenin' sayin' little or nothin' and thinkin' out all kinds o' questions, than hear me chatterin' 'round sayin' nothin' worth rememberin'."

Then with a resort to his never-failing philosophy, he continued:

"When I find a woman that's a cross 'tween Sue an' Mary an' a little more of the earth earthy — as Elder Spaulding would say — I'm goin' for 'er hard. An' if I never find 'er, I'll console myself as well as I can, sailor-fashion, with a sweetheart in every port.

P'haps a steamboat cap'n's like a priest — better off without a wife!"

The odor of hot mince-pie came to the man under the tree, and he was strongly reminded of the fact that he was hungry.

"I can stand anything but that!" he said to himself. Audacious by nature, he was tempted to "happen in" on the feast; but, with rare self-denial he concluded that under the circumstances his room was better than his company. Drawing his belt a notch tighter, he started down the road muttering to himself, "They say there's better fish in the sea than's ever been caught: but I don't believe it."

CHAPTER XXV

Among the Militant Mormons at Council Bluffs

Here occurs a break in the heart history of the lovers whose woes and joys have been brought most prominently before the reader's attention. Happily the gap can for the most part be filled by recourse to a packet of old letters — a dozen or more, from Major, formerly Lieutenant Woodruff, and two from Mary Sinclair. Evidently many more letters were written during the separation of the lovers; but the burning of a steamer on the Missouri, frequent mail robberies along the Santa Fé trail, and the general inefficiency of the mail service in the southwest during the Forties, all together account for the relatively small number actually received.

It seems best to let these old letters — or liberal extracts from them — tell their own story. With the knowledge the reader already has of the correspondents, it will be easy to fill in details.

The letters of Major Woodruff will be found to throw interesting side-lights upon an episode in the story of our war with Mexico concerning which the histories are either silent or strangely misleading.

"Ft. Leavenworth, April 4th, 1846.

. . . . . .

"After reading President Tyler's December Message, if the purpose of the Administration to pre-

cipitate a war with Mexico is not painfully apparent, then turn to the President's order of January 13 directing Gen. Taylor to advance and occupy positions on or near the left bank of the Rio del Norte. My dear, *that means invasion.* A battle is now inevitable, — and that to be followed by a series of battles lasting until the enemy cries quit.

"In my judgment — based on the record and upon the confidential opinions of old army friends who are in position to know — there never was a more deliberately planned and persistently wrought out scheme of conquest.

"By the code of the army one's duty as a soldier is entirely independent of his duty as a *man.* I was a man — tho a very young man — before I became a soldier, and I refuse to be bound by a code which has no respect for my manhood. But I deplore the situation which compels me to quit the field almost in the presence of the enemy."

"Council Bluffs, June 24, 1846.

. . . . . .

"The seemingly insoluble problem is solved! On the 13th Col. Kearny gave Capt. Allen orders to proceed to Council Bluffs, organize a battalion of Mormons, march the recruits to Ft. Leavenworth, arm and equip them for field service, and lead them over the so-called Kearny trail to Santa Fé, and there await further orders. The understanding is that the battalion will march thence to San Diego to strengthen the defense of our border.

"The order promotes our friend the Captain to a lieutenant-colonelcy — with a brevet as colonel. It empowers Col. Allen to appoint the remaining officers of the regiment. As you might readily guess, he did not forget his friend. Be sure to address me as 'Major Woodruff,' for Lieutenant Woodruff is no more! At my suggestion and request, Captain Hunt will serve as acting Lieutenant-colonel. He is very strong with his brother Mormons, and it is policy to do them honor by placing one of their number next in command — but he knows almost as much about military tactics as I do about the Book of Mormon!

"I gladly accepted this promotion, for it squares me with my conscience without holding me up to scorn. It also gives me opportunity to render my country a service by contributing to the defense of the southwestern border, and at the same time, to aid several hundred well-meaning but narrow-minded men in the consummation of their fondest hope — that of planting homes somewhere beyond the mountains where freedom to worship God in their own illogical way will be vouchsafed to them and to their children.

"Companies A. B. and C. took up the line of march today, with acting Col. Hunt in command. Tomorrow Companies D. and E. will follow with your newfledged Major at their head.

"And now, dear Mary, before you give yourself up to pity for your lover, fancying him depressed by the Falstaffian quality of his recruits, let me give

you an outline sketch of these Saints as they really are. In the first place they literally regard cleanliness as next to godliness — and a good second that virtue is, as *you* will readily admit. Then, again, with all their fanaticism they are a cheery lot — childlike, light-hearted, trustful, happy in their unquestioning faith in their leaders. The elders are believers in the old fallacy that the end justifies the means. They work their revelations with due regard to timeliness, careful never to overwork this source of power! We follow our judgment part of the time — our intuitions most of the time. Did it ever occur to you that, trained as they have been, we too might easily bring ourselves egoistically to conclude that the thing we intuitively incline to do might be in the nature of a revelation? But I'm not justifying our Mormon brethren — I'm trying to account for them — that's all.

"Speaking of their cleanliness. Last Monday morning — before my Mary was up — I made the rounds to find out how well the Colonel's orders were obeyed, and found they were obeyed to the letter. Set down honesty and punctuality as good third and fourth points in their favor. But what I set out to say was that at that early hour I found the near-by streams were lined with these Mormon women doing the family washing, and later, on my return, I found the clothes bleaching on the grass.

"The bluffs and slopes are white with tents and swarming with humanity — like a community of ants

when disturbed. The bottom-land below the bluffs, is dotted with covered wagons. The slopes are alive with sheep, cattle and horses. Everywhere I go I find an air of expectancy — not joyous but eager. The 'Promised Land' seen in their dreams has evidently put new heart of hope into these modern Children of Israel."

"Council Bluffs, Iowa, July 1, 1846.

. . . . . .

"Col. Allen and his fidus Achates — myself — recently visited Mt. Pisgah — a Mormon settlement in Iowa Territory, well on toward Fort Des Moines, and yet so far from that dear haven of my hopes! As we rode eastward over the prairie I felt a growing nearness to you. I fancied Old Grey felt it too, for he pranced like a colt and had to be held in by main strength. One noon, somewhat overcome by the heat, I temporarily gave way to a treasonable thought, induced by a line or two from a bit of verse learned when I was a boy:

> "'I flew to the pleasant fields traversed so oft
> In life's morning march,' etc.

"You remember the rest. I felt like leaning over and whispering in Old Grey's ear the word 'go' for which he waited. Just then, the Col. — who hadn't spoken for half an hour, turned to me and coolly remarked I had fully convinced him a man could be sound asleep with his eyes wide open, and yet keep a firm seat in his saddle! I let it go at that — though I was never more keenly alive.

"At Pisgah — by courtesy called 'Mount Pisgah' — we met the High Council of Mormondom, and obtained a joint letter from Elder Woodruff and the rest to President Young favoring enlistments. The worldly-wise Woodruff, forestalling the President's 'revelation' sent on to the Bluffs ahead of us a letter setting forth the advantages of our offer. How much influence that letter had on the after-revelation, I'll not pretend to guess. I only know that though some doubted the expediency of reaching out after 'the mammon of unrighteousness,' President Young met us more than half-way, and thereafter never wavered.

"Our battalion is filling fast. Recruits are flocking in from Pisgah, from Garden Grove, and from beyond the Big Muddy.

"President Young is to me a most interesting study. Somehow I feel sure you would instinctively dislike him — and I have great respect for my Mary's instincts; and yet I have a qualified admiration for the man. He's a great big man every way — stolid, self-reliant, imperturbable, shrewd, long-headed, far-sighted, resourceful. I regard his so-called revelations as so many extremely interesting revelations of himself."

"Council Bluffs, July 15, 1846.

. . . . . .

"When I think of the inevitable hardships of the few women and children who — against my protest — are to accompany us on our long march, I find

consolation in the fact that you, dear Mary, are among friends who love you, that you have an absorbing occupation, that the good people of the town and country are enabling you to turn your little common school into a real, live 'academy,' and that — while our separation is hard to bear — you are not worrying about the fidelity of your absent lover, knowing that he is yours and you 'his'n,' for time and for eternity.

"And yet, O inconsistent man that I am! when I think of the intervening months — perhaps years! — before I can come back to you, I pace the beaten track in front of my tent like a caged lion until, finally, from sheer weariness, I throw myself down upon my cot and vainly try to sleep. If I could scratch out the above sentence without unduly stimulating your womanly curiosity and so making the case worse than it is, I'd do so, for I don't want you to think of me as a roaring lion. Most of the time I am really a model officer, — obeying orders with alacrity, and otherwise doing my duty in the new and strange sphere 'to which it has pleased God to call me,' — comforting the sorrowing, gingering up the indolent, disciplining the coltish, drilling officers in the a-b-c of handling companies, teaching what Col. Allen calls my 'broom-stick brigade' in the manual of arms in preparation for handling the muskets awaiting them at Ft. Leavenworth, and otherwise making myself useful."

"Council Bluffs, July 18, 1846.

. . . . . .

"This afternoon was given over to a 'Grand Farewell Ball!' I am almost sorry you were not there. An extensive arbour, or 'bowery' had been built of poles and brush and wattling — an oblong structure open on all sides, with a platform at one end, from which preachers first exhorted the people to be trusting and brave, and then gave way to the fiddlers who after labouriously 'tuning-up' struck up a dancing tune to which many eagerly responded.

"The ground inside this pavilion had been literally packed hard by the knees of praying men, women and children, and by the feet of dancers, after prayers. So many spectators crowded in and around the enclosure that the numerous dancers on this occasion had little room for cavorting and had many ludicrous collisions.

"Wouldn't you have thought the marching order for tomorrow would have thrown a gloom over the occasion? Well, it did and it didn't! After the exhorters had done their worst, a handsome young woman with a thrilling mezzo-soprano voice sang —

> "'By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept;
> We wept when we remembered Zion!

"As she sang, the sobbing of the women and the tears of the men made even Col. Allen's chin quiver — not to speak of my own!

"But these delightfully childlike people could not remain long in this melodramatic frame of mind.

The screech of the fiddler, with the announcement that the first dance would be 'French Four' dissipated the gloom. Tears were brushed away, glum faces became wreathed with smiles, and there was a merry scramble for places on the floor.

"I wish you might have stood with me behind the fiddlers on the platform and studied the dancers — especially the women and girls. You should know that before their exodus from Nauvoo they sold all their jewelry. You would have looked in vain for ear-rings, finger-rings, brooches or neck-chains. Their calico dresses were immaculately clean; but most of them had a worn and faded look suggesting better days. Not a few of the girls and young women were pretty and graceful; but, had you seen their sallow-faced mothers standing in the background watching their daughters winding in and out through the mazes of the dance, you would surely have prophesied a sad and even tragic future for most of them.

"In the midst of the dance (in which I was persuaded to join) I thought of that other dance — at the old trading-post on the East Side — in the course of which I thought I had lost you! I'll confess to you now that when I missed you from the ball-room and, later, saw you come in leaning on Charlie Millard's arm, your face flushed and your eyes beaming, I became almost insanely jealous. Ever since that night, I have had keen sympathy with the Romeos who are pushed by their jealousy over the dead-line between sanity and insanity!"

CHAPTER XXVI

In Camp at Fort Leavenworth

"St. Joseph, July 29, 1846.

. . . . . .

"You should have seen us march into St. Joe to the tune 'The girl I left behind me!' Wearied and foot-sore as our raw recruits were at this stage of their first march, they braced up and marched through the main street like a battalion of militia on General Training Day!

"Here I must stop to mail my letter. Hope it will find you well and happy — if indeed it find you at all — which I very much doubt. In either case I am sending over the Iowa prairie a heart-to-heart message to my darling Mary.

"By the way, I've never told you how glad I am your name is Mary. Like Byron — I think it was Byron — 'I have a passion for the name of Mary.'

"Remember always that though I omit the formality of sending love to 'Sister Sue,' the love is always there and should be read between the lines. Tell 'Brother John' I love him as well as one man can love another, but not with quite the same intensity with which he loves Sue and I love you. Strange, isn't it!"

"Ft. Leavenworth, Aug. 1st, 1846.

. . . . . .

"Back in Leavenworth again — but under circumstances undreamt of when I first wrote you from this point. I suppose my darling Mary would call it Providence; Col. Allen calls it Fate, and *I* can't quite bring myself to say it's Chance! So there I am — halting between two opinions and inclined 'to take to the woods!' I would feel decidedly uncomfortable over my uncertainty had not History and Philosophy separately informed me, years ago, that even the wisest in every age have, like myself, debated the question over and over again, and finally jumped fence and taken to the woods!

"We are encamped in the public square. Our new white tents present a handsome appearance and the jollity of our young and vigorous Saints is the talk of both town and garrison. Everybody expected to see a crowd of long-faced, long-haired fanatics, more at home on their knees than on their feet. Instead we bring them several hundred up-and-coming young and middle-aged men, full of music and fun, eager to 'strike the trail,' and full of hope and courage. A month's pay with an allowance for clothing has renewed their youth.

"They have been supplied with flint-lock muskets and cap-lock yangers for hunting and sharp-shooting; our quartermaster has received a quantity of camp equipment and our commissary department is pretty well supplied. The men are growing impa-

tient, — but alas! Col. Allen shows no sign of recovery. I think I wrote you he was very ill.

"My friend, the Col. says there is all the more need of my services if he finds himself unable to start with us, for Lieut. Col. Hunt depends on me to coach him if he should be compelled to assume command. It is therefore settled that in either event I must go with the battalion — 'But O the difference to me!' "

"Ft. Leavenworth, Aug. 11, 1846.

. . . . . .

"Good-bye, dear heart! We're off. While I write, the notes of preparation are heard everywhere about me. They are music to my ears, for fate (or 'Providence') seems to have decreed that my quickest route to Fort Des Moines — *and you* — is via Santa Fé — and San Diego! It is folly to quarrel with the inevitable — so the sooner we start, the sooner I can honourably ask for a discharge, — *and go to you* — and settle down to the constructive work of an engineer to which I now firmly believe 'it hath pleased God to call me.'

"It is a long way to Santa Fé with nearly five hundred men on foot and a wagon-train pulling up the rear. But our men are rested, well-fed, well-clothed, armed and equipped — and withal eager. Again, good-bye, I will write you a good long letter from Santa Fé — and possibly I may find a letter from Ft. D.M. awaiting me there though I dare not hope."

CHAPTER XXVII

The Sea! The Sea!

"Near San Luis Rey, January 27th, 1847.

. . . . . .

"Dear Mary, can you imagine, for if you can't, then no one can — the wild joy with which this afternoon we looked upon the sea! Independently of all it *meant* to us, it was of itself a grand, inspiring sight. I was riding at the head of our straggling column up the mountain, to the east of the San Luis Rey mission and, looking off, I saw far to the west the deep blue expanse of ocean stretching westward until it met the pale blue of the sky. — And what do you think flashed across my mind after that first moment of exultation? I saw reflected there the sky-blue of my Mary's laughing eyes and the ocean-blue of her eyes when last they looked up into mine, suffused with tears!

"Let me tell you what that supreme moment meant to me. It meant the beginning of the end of my wanderings — the sure promise of a finished task — an early return 'home' — the beginning of a new life — *with you.* It meant even more — but that's enough!

"To these fearful and well-nigh heart-sick saints it meant a new home — with liberty to worship, in

their own narrow way, without molestation or proscription. It meant ultimate reunion with loved ones, the re-erection of the family altar, the reorganization of their patriarchal community life. It was to them a veritable fulfilment of prophecy — the Promised Land long seen in their dreams.

"Others, with them, had dreamed of it, prayed for it, sickened and died in the long struggle to attain it; but here, about me, were the men who *had attained*!

"Feeling for them as well as for myself, I keep saying over and over again, the words you taught me. How well I remember my lesson!

> " 'Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
> When a new planet swims into his ken;
> Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
> He stared at the Pacific, — and all his men
> Look'd at each other with a wild surmise, —
> Silent, upon a peak of Darien.'

"If you've received any of my letters, you'll acquit me of any attempt to be bookish, but I can't help recalling a similar experience related by an old friend of my grammar-school days — one *Xenophon* by name. This is the substance of the story as he related it to me. Riding, in the rear of his troops, up the mountain — I've forgotten the name of the mountain, he was startled by loud outcries from those who were at the top. His first thought was that enemies had attacked him in front. The shouts were prolonged. Officers and men madly raced up the mountain to see for themselves what had happened.

Galloping up the steep way, his ears were greeted with the words, 'The sea! The sea!' And when he reached the summit, he beheld officers and men embracing — tears of joy running down their battle-scarred faces; and, from many voices came the glad refrain, '*The sea! The sea!*'

"So it was with us. For the moment, rank was obliterated, jealousies were forgotten! The petty tyrannies practiced by officers upon the men who had elected them to office, were all forgiven! Men embraced and wept for joy. Our Xenophon — Col. Cooke (who joined us at Santa Fé) — rode alongside Old Grey and — in the absence of any one more hugable — put his arm around my waist and gave me a very robust hug, — and then we shook hands with surprising cordiality. You should have heard the cracked voices of these way-worn veterans as they tried to follow their full-throated leaders in songs of praise!

"I *must* give you a single incident. One of the elders — old and bent and white-haired — who had ridden nearly all the way from Mt. Pisgah, called me to him and, in a voice weak and trembling, said he had never before *known* the mind of Moses as he viewed the Promised Land from Mt. Pisgah. 'Like Moses' said he, 'I have had my warning. I, too have viewed the Promised Land: but it is not for me to enter in. Nevertheless, I shall die happy in the thought that I have *seen* it and that those who are

dearer to me than my own spent life will enter in and possess it.'

"His words were prophetic, for on the day following our entry into San Diego, we dug a burial place for his wasted body on the hill overlooking the bay."

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Woman-Soul Revealed

"Fort Des Moines, Dec. 25, 1846.

. . . . . .

"Christmas again! You know I am with you in spirit, Dear One, wherever you are. Would that I could look in upon you — that I might make the day a happy one for you! That would indeed be happiness for me.

"Preparations for the evening's celebration are going on about me, with our Susan — ideal daughter, sister and wife, — the reigning queen of a happy home — without whom nothing is done, whose merest suggestion — ever so quietly made — is unquestioningly accepted as law, — not alone by her dutiful sister but also by her brothers, and by her kindly serviceable husband, her willing but amusingly awkward father, and her more and more dependent and doting mother!

"Both cabins — ours (the one awaiting you) and theirs — are occupied. Father and mother are with me, and the boys with Susan.

"These star-lit nights I sit looking out of my north window down upon the river reflecting the stars and up into the sky with the myriad floating

islands of fleecy clouds, 'shepherded by the unwilling wind' and thinking of — what?

"Let me report the one sad memory first. A year ago tonight I sat by the window through which, a few weeks before, I had tearfully watched you pass from my sight and take your place in the inner sanctuary of my memory, and for a time I yielded to my heart's fierce protest against Fate's decree. In other words, I cried — bitter, resentful tears on Christmas night! O, it was awful, but, believe me, the tears brought relief — not consolation, but positive relief. Perhaps *you* may be able to explain the philosophy of a woman's tears!

"Fast following the flood of tears came memories of that other Christmas — that blessed day — two years ago. Though the words which pledged us for time and eternity had not then been spoken, I *knew* my heart had not erred in appropriating to itself the assurance of love conveyed by your eyes, your voice, — and even your silences — when the near-approaching end of your stay was casually mentioned.

"A woman knows when she is loved — and when she is only admired. The formal proposal, followed by the formal acceptance, is only the ratification of the victory Love has won.

"Darling, don't you see how far I am advanced in Love's school of experience? There isn't a single phase of our life's greatest problem that I haven't well considered. My mind has presented to my heart every aspect of our individual case and has grad-

ually led down to conclusions which no circumstance or chain of circumstances can ever modify. Let me tell you, as well as I can on paper, what those conclusions are, and let me state them in my poor woman's way — by a personal application.

"With the arrival of every steamer and every stage, I find myself looking longingly — and thus far vainly — for a letter from you, and yet never in my hours of deepest gloom have I questioned your fidelity to me. I *know* you have written me often — even though you may not have heard from me; and I know you know I have not failed to write.

"And again, I hope and pray continually for your early and safe return; but, if the cruel Giant Circumstance should hold you prisoner for two — or five — or even ten years, I would not — could not — doubt your loyalty.

"And now, dear heart, I come to the supreme test. One day a letter came from Santa Fé — to Tour de Quoot — an ex-soldier, (who never fails to inquire about you) — in which a wild rumor was given for what it was worth, to the effect that your Battalion had been ambushed and few, if any, had escaped! I dismissed the rumour as wild, but nevertheless it brought me face to face with the question — 'What if he were dead?' My heart's ready answer was: 'If he is yet alive, he will come back to me. If he is dead, he will wait my coming on the other shore. Meanwhile, he will continue to visit me in my dreams; in recurring memories of the precious moments and

hours we have spent together — in memories of the books we have enjoyed together, of the woods and hills and valleys and river we have learned to love, of the thoughts we have exchanged, the views and opinions we have together held, the vistas of truth and beauty we have seen together and the daring flights of imagination we have made together. And, should my stay on earth be lengthened into years, and should new experiences lead me on and up to higher heights than we were permitted to climb together, I shall find soul companionship in the thought that '*he* (you) would have enjoyed this,' or 'that is what *he* would have thought — or said — or done.'

"Dear heart and soul of mine, there has been no miserly thrift in my bestowal. Verily I have given as the gods give, — I have freely, gladly proffered the whole. And with this solemn dedication, I reaffirm that I not only am, but shall always remain — *Yours*,

"Mary Sinclair"

This was the longer of the two letters which came to gladden the heart of the lover. The shorter one breathed the same constancy, the same patience and long-suffering, but contained much of family and neighborhood news, some of which may be inferred from the extracts already given — the rest not essential to the heart-history related in these pages. These are evidently the only messages that came from Mary Sinclair to Major Woodruff from that

far-away July day when the battalion started on the long trail from Leavenworth to San Diego.

This is all — and yet the world is full of soul-starved men — and women too — to whom such an avowal of constancy would be deemed sufficient to redeem the saddest life from failure, quite enough to crown the lowliest life with the laurel wreath of victory.

CHAPTER XXIX

Headed toward Home

"Los Angeles, May 10th, '47.

. . . . . .

"Gen. Kearny has arrived from Monterey and a salute was fired in his honour. He addressed our battalion today declaring that History might be searched in vain for an infantry march equal to ours! Hear him: 'Bonaparte crossed the Alps, but you have crossed a continent! Your achievement was the greater,' he added, 'because, unfortunately, your battalion started from Santa Fé without adequate food-supply.' He advised our men to accept a one-year re-enlistment for the protection of our border, also enabling them to summer and winter in the country and so determine more wisely where to locate. The men turned to me, asking me if I would remain with them. — They went away sorrowing."

"Los Angeles, May 13, 1847.

. . . . . .

"I can hardly contain myself to write the words that follow. If my hand trembles, it is with suppressed excitement. Yesterday all seemed uncertain and gloomy: today the world — *my* world — is bright

with hope and promise. *I start for Leavenworth* tomorrow!

"This forenoon, as I was taking my after-breakfast smoke before going to work on a big stack of official papers, an orderly announced that General Kearny desired to see me at headquarters. In a few moments I was ushered into his presence. He shook hands with me cordially and, when seated, he remarked that he had been hearing good words about me, both from my Colonel and from my Mormon brethren. He added, smiling grimly, 'When your chief and those below you in rank unite in speaking well of you, you're in luck.' And then he added seriously, 'There ain't any luck about it, Major Woodruff, you're a faithful and efficient officer, and I need you, and what's more, I'm going to take you back with me to Fort Leavenworth. Cooke and I start tomorrow at early candle-light, with yourself and a small body-guard of three men from each company in the Battalion. We shall need your help this afternoon; so say your good-byes to the Saints and incidentally tell 'em to quit sinning! I'll expect you to report to me at noon.'

"I tried to hide behind that stoical look of mine which used to puzzle you; but the barrier broke down. I rushed over to the General and grabbing him with both hands told him his words had put new life into me. — And what do you think followed? The General put his arm around me in a big-brother-

ly way, and this is what he said — these are his very words:

"'Evidently you didn't waste any time during your three years with Colonel Allen at Fort Des Moines.'

"What do you mean, General?" said I innocently, but with a rush of blood to my cheeks quite equal to one of *your* attacks.

"But all he would condescend to answer was, 'If you can't guess my meaning, there's no use trying to make it plain. So off with you and don't keep our dinner waiting.'

"I backed out of the tent — awkwardly tipping over a chair — and rushed over to camp.

"Glad as I was when it came to parting with the Saints — many of them endeared to me by intimate association in adversity — I felt a keen sense of sorrow.

"You would scarcely believe there was so much affection in these rough, be-whiskered, sallow-visaged men. Not one or two but several of them actually shed tears at parting. It was pathetic — their offers of prayer for my safe return, and their entreaties that I take early opportunity to go or write to Council Bluffs and learn what had become of their dear ones. At least thirty or forty rushed back to their tents to write letters to their families, for I promised to forward their letters on my arrival at Leavenworth.

"That was a busy afternoon. After supper with the General and the two Colonels, — the old and the new — I pitched into work, and when ten o'clock came, all was ready for the start at early candlelight.

"I am bringing this letter with me, feeling somewhat surer that it will reach you if mailed at Leavenworth than if committed to the mails here."

CHAPTER XXX

The Whistle of the "Demoine Belle" and What Followed

Late one Saturday afternoon in September, 1847, Mary Sinclair started out alone to take her 'hour's walk' for health's sake, as prescribed by her solicitous friend, Dr. Brooks. Susan, now a happy mother, had divined her sister's wish to go alone — and always over "the Dragoons' Trail" which her lover had taken.

Her accustomed walk led her over a stretch of rolling prairie and across a shallow stream, thence on until she reached the ford of the Raccoon river.

Unusually weary and dispirited that day, Mary had seated herself on the river bank, and there, with eyes bent on the opening in the woods across the river, she indulged the fancy that she saw her lover reappear in the shadows.

Then there came thronging back the old questions which her hungry heart had asked a thousand times:

Why had she not heard from him for many months? Had his letters been lost? — or withheld? Had he received her letters? Or was he, too, wondering why no word had come from her? Had a careful investigation satisfied him that he should, and could, conscientiously remain in the service? Was

he still among the living? Might he not have died on the march? And then she ended where she began, with "Why hasn't *some* word come to me from him?" Then followed a flood of tears.

The unavailing struggle with cruel fate had scarcely ended when the well-known whistle of Captain Millard's "Demoine Belle" brought her to her feet with a start. A glance at the setting sun reminded her of the lateness of the hour. With head bent and eyes cast down she wearily turned her steps homeward. Stopping a moment to rest under the shade of an elm, she cast a tired glance eastward toward the town.

There, slowly rising above the sky-line, she saw first the head and then the shoulders, and finally the entire figure of a man, — and he was coming toward her! Something in the figure — something in the gait — conveyed to her eager mind a suggestion of the one for whom she had so long and wearily waited. And yet it could not be he! It was not his rapid, swinging stride, — and there was something halting in his gait. And, too, the man had a slight droop of the shoulders — *her* hero was erect.

At the top of the hill the man stopped to rest. She could not think of her lover as halting on his way to her! Baring his head to wipe his brow, his hair seemed tinged with gray: her lover's hair was black.

Whoever he was, the man wore the fatigue suit of an army officer! A cloud of fear and dread floated

across the path of her mind. Was he some brother-officer sent to inform her of the death of her hope? An indefinable resemblance suggested that he might be the elder brother of whom she had heard him speak, on whose advice he had early chosen the career of a soldier. If it were he, there could be but one reason for his coming — the fulfilment of a promise — or, at least, a duty to the dead — that of bringing a message to the living. — *That must be it!* He had arrived on the boat, had gone to Susan's home and, in his haste to deliver himself of his message he was coming to meet her.

The stranger wearily resumed his walk. He seemed to be looking for some one, for his hand was raised to his face to shield his eyes from the setting sun. A turn in the roadway brought Mary directly between him and the sun, and the breeze silhouetted her figure so plainly that, to any one who knew her, there could be no mistaking her identity.

As she strained her eyes to obtain a better view, she thought she saw the stranger wave his hand. Instinctively she returned the salute, blushing at her presumption.

The elder-brother suggestion returned with added force. In a flashlight of the imagination she saw her hero stricken down in battle or on the march. Then the scene changed and she saw him lying dead in a camp hospital. Strangers were standing about him waiting to remove his body.

Another wave of the man's hand. Mary responded, this time with a nervous fling of her handkerchief. Now fully convinced that the man approaching was the bearer of bad news, and frantically eager to know the worst, she ran to meet her fate.

She reached the shallow stream. With unsteady step she sprang from one boulder to another. She ran frantically up the yielding bank of sand, fearful lest the vision might disappear leaving her alone with her misery. Reaching the overhanging turf, the sod gave way beneath her feet. She threw herself forward and fell prone upon the grass. The blood rushed to her brain and with a cry of defeat she lost consciousness.

A few moments later, Mary wakened from a dreamless sleep to a dream of ineffable bliss. She fancied she was sitting by her lover's side on the bank of a stream — a river — yes, her beloved Des Moines! A great elm protected them from the low-slanting sun. He had told her of his hope that at no distant day he would come back to her and make her his wife — *his wife*! She felt a sustaining arm about her waist. She essayed to open her eyes; and then a doubt flashed across her confused mind, and she said to herself, "Let the dream last as long as it will!"

With eyes still closed she turned her head toward the lover seen in her dream and smiled. Verily, the old smile of youth and hope had come back to her wan face!

She heard a voice — *his* voice; and, in the strange calm following the fierce storm, she even noted that the voice pronounced her name as no one else had ever pronounced it, the voice lingering on the "a." She recalled the time when he had first called her "Mary," imparting to the name new dignity and beauty.

Now fully assured of her lover's actual presence, with a subtlety which the feminine mind so well knows how to employ in self-defence, for a moment Mary simulated unconsciousness, lest she might not yet be strong enough to look into the eyes intently watching her for signs of returning consciousness. She became aware of the old tell-tale rush of blood to her cheeks. Her lips parted with a smile. Her eyelids slowly opened and — ecstatic moment! — the azure of the sky was reflected in her wondering laughing eyes, upturned to meet his gaze. Nestling closer and, twining her arms about his neck, she spoke:

"Darling, just let me lie in your arms awhile till strength comes back to me! Let me close my eyes again and listen — for I am too weak — and too happy — to talk. Call me Mary again, — and tell me about yourself."

Running her hand through his iron-gray hair and recalling his halting gait, with motherly tenderness she exclaimed: "Dear heart, how you have suffered! Tell me, darling, what it all means — what has hap-

pened. Tell me all — but only in a general way now, for Susan and brother John — her husband you know — will want to hear the story in detail."

Assured of her recovery, the returned wanderer bent over her and reverently kissed her forehead. Then, looking into her laughing, challenging eyes, he passionately kissed her cheeks and lips, and called her "wife." He then proceeded to tell in outline the story of his wanderings, ending the narration with an account of his long journey back to his heart's home.

Mary lay in his arms and listened with closed eyes, her expressive face responding to every note of woe or joy. The story ended, her eyes opened wide and her face became luminous with the joy of a great hope renewed.

Springing to her feet with much of her old girlish buoyancy — as if suddenly remembering that the ecstacy of the moment must give place to duties and responsibilities, — she gravely remarked that her side of the story must wait; in fact, it was little more than a story of waiting — of hope deferred and consequent heart-sickness. She then reminded him that Susan must have long ago begun to wonder why they had not returned.

With that, the two, with youth miraculously renewed, walked home together. "Play we're children!" said Mary gaily, and a trifle hysterically; and the fond lover, humoring her whim, boyishly

grasped her outstretched hand. With arms swinging back and forth, and with an occasional skip, and a run down-hill, they wended their way back to the home overlooking the river, — the home Mary had seen in her dream on that night of nights when the sisters, with their lovers, gaily joined the procession of home-seekers, and later, sat in the starlight peering into the future.

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